...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

THE VILLAGE "POPE" DENOUNCES THE STUNDISTS.

CHAPTER I.

A Village in the Ukraine.

SLAVO, when you enter it, is like almost every South Russian village, a huddled crowd of squat and dirty huts, either of mud or plastered planks, the whitewash peeling off, the roofs green and decaying. The roads are dull, broad, and unbroken, filled with malodorous refuse, in which the children, the pigs, and the dogs wallow.

There are old men and "babui" sitting at the doors, the men mostly in red shirts, loose trousers, and high boots of coarse construction; the women in brightly colored head-kerchiefs and short petticoats. Everywhere there is a tumble-down appearance, as though nobody had any encouragement to erect again anthing that had happened to fall. No one seems to be either richer or poorer than another. If by any chance a peasant happens to make a little money, it is by hard parsimony, and not by enterprise; he hoards, but never invests. He is inert, lazy, full of dreams, and far too poetical to understand the joys and activities of business. In the early spring he bestows some little attention on his fields, and during harvest he works like a galley-slave; but all the while he is thinking of his holidays and of dancing, and of the grand opportunities of getting drunk which a bounteous harvest will give him.

If you happen to pass a Sunday in Slavo you will see the religion of the people. The villagers saunter up to the church with the lax joints of the reposing toiler and crowd around the doors, and murmur together the small talk of the village, crossing themselves devoutly and repeatedly as the bell above warns them when some particularly impressive portion of the service is being said.

The more devout are inside with the women. Here all is pathetic and full of significance. Women with eyes red from weeping are clustered round the altar of the Virgin, and either holding lighted guttering tapers in their hands or sticking them in the little receptacles before the saint's pale face. They are praying, generally begging for the life or the restored health of some one very dear to them, and feeling that Mary knows what is the cost of bitter tears shed over a bier.

By counting the tapers you can tell almost exactly the number of poor souls lying in the village in extremity or in pain. And when the priest in his tawdry robes has finished his liturgy, said in the deepest of bass voices, they all troop out, and a few beggars round the church door receive great lumps of rye bread, for no true Russian ever turns empty away a "guest of God," as he beautifully calls the poor outcasts who tramp so forlornly from village to village.

Slavo lies some sixty miles from the city of Kief, lower down the mighty river which has played so prominent a role in the history of Russia. A white ribbon of road across the steppe from Kief leads to the village which tops the high bank on the opposite side of the stream, here flowing among poplars and stunted alders and great expanses of reeds. The road ceases at a long low belt of sand opposite the village, covered by the stream in the floods of spring, and a rude ferry takes the traveler across the river where he is landed among sedge and scrub just below the village. The gently sloping bank, of which Slavo crowns the top, is cut down by picturesque little gullies filled with brushwood. In the centre of the long straggling village stands the church, a low cruciform building crudely white-washed, with high sunlit bell-tower, and green star-spangled cupola which glitters afar off under the sun.

You ascend to the village and look down on the Dnieper, wide, calm, and strong, sweeping along in majestic curves and reaches, and away across it to the illimitable steppe and the hazy horizon. In early April it is all green and peaceful, the air is exquisitely clear, there is a strange sense of expanse in the wide plain and the blue sky vaulted over it. But if it be toward the end of summer that one enters Slavo, you look upon a totally changed scene. The air is hot and dry; the parched earth gapes under the sun; the steppe which in April is broidered with flowers, is now bare or clothed only with withered weed, and the whole land has a tawny torrid look. You feel at once the character of the mighty wilderness that stretches from here all the way with scarcely a break right to the Wall of China and the snowy barriers of the Thian Shan.

It would be giving only an imperfect idea of Slavo if we stopped here. On that side of the village remotest from the river there are scattered about some thirty or forty houses whose appearance denotes that the dwellers in them are men and women of an altogether different stamp to the rest of the villagers. They are in perfect repair, with walls freshly white-washed, and roofs freshly thatched. In place of the midden before the door there are brightly-painted railings, and at the houses where one had hitherto seen only a filthy yard and untidy and ruinous outhouses, are neat little vegetable gardens and trim haggards. Instead of the loose red shirt, the unkempt beard, and dirt-grimed faces of the ordinary villagers, the owners of these cottages are dressed in the neat costume of western peasants; they are for the most part clean-shaven, and they are scrupulously tidy and clean.

The villagers in the red shirts look upon these people as little better than heathens, and although they feel that their influence is slowly permeating the village, it remains quite incomprehensible how they can exist without getting drunk occasionally, without smoking, without attending church, without icons, as the holy pictures are called, without attaching any importance to the prazdniki, or numerous festivals of the church.

"Our fathers," the villagers would say, "lived as we are living, dressed as we dress, ploughed as we plough, got drunk, danced, prayed as we do; why should we change all this, and eschew our pleasures, and dress like Germans, and sing hymns, and read books?"

"Ah," the village pope would say, talking things over with some selected members of his flock, "Ah, these Stundists will ruin the country. Why should we think ourselves wiser than our fathers? Where will all this stir lead to? These wretched heretics have sundered themselves from our holy church; they scorn our icons and our crosses which we have adored from childhood, which the Tsar himself adores; they follow the customs of the Germans, who are heretics. I entered Kulmenko's cottage yesterday, and when I would have bowed and crossed myself before the icon, I saw before me a picture of the heretic Luther."

Every one shook his head sorrowfully, and they all went off to Haim Rosenberg's kabak to assuage their grief with vodka.

Beneath these prejudiced words of the village priest we get a glimpse of the truth.

Ten years before this an old laborer who had lived all his life in Slavo, had returned to his home after a year spent in a German colony in the south. He had left his village a beggar, and had wandered far away to the shores of the Euxine, doing odd jobs of work to keep body and soul together. He had been the village reprobate and drunkard; he had clothed himself for years in the same filthy rags; his wife and children had led the life of dogs. Everyone felt relieved when it was discovered that he had left Slavo. No one knew whither he had gone, and everyone was surprised when one summer evening he returned. He had been away among the Germans, he said simply, and they had given him work, and had taught his stiff fingers to write a little, and had given him a Book, a beautiful Book, which he had learned to read, and he had seen from the Book what a great sinner he had been, and how good God was. He could stay away no longer, but had come back to his home, and, God helping him, he would lead a new life, and look forward to a happy remainder of days This old man was Ivan Kulmenko.

Like all true disciples the world over he began at once to tell to others the message that had brought such comfort to his own soul, that had wrought such a change in his life. The village drunkard had become the village model. The peasants flocked to his cottage, now transformed to a neat and cheerful abode, and gazed with admiration at the shining walls and the neat thatch and the springing flowers and vegetables, at the smiling wife and healthy boy, the crude prints of Luther and at his books, and clean clothes, and white shirts. Some shook their heads and predicted that misfortune must surely fall on the head of this old innovator; others, the younger men, were stirred to emulation, and took away many a useful hint.

But it was on Sundays that old Kulmenko had most visitors. It got abroad that as many as liked could come to his cottage on Sunday evenings, and be welcome. His wife made tea and baked famous "pirogi," and when these were dispatched the old man would stand before all the people, and show them how the Germans worshipped God. He had brought home with him some rough Russian translations of German hymns, and in his memory he had stored away fragments of the hymns German colonists sang. Kulmenko used to piece the tunes and words together, and render the result to his hearers. But no one saw anything ludicrous in the scene; they were impressed and awed by words the like of which they had never before listened to; and before long they sang the rudely improvised hymns better than Kulmenko himself. But it was not so much the hymns as the New Testament that impressed them. At one sitting old Ivan would read a whole Gospel, and they would all look sad when he read that Jesus wept, and would break into floods of tears when he recited the awful and pathetic story of the Cross and Passion. A few Testaments that Kulmenko had brought home with him found their way among the people, and were eagerly read. Hardly a year had passed before a little band of disciples were gathered around the old man. They hung on his words; they prayed sang and read their Gospels; they escl the village drink-shop, and ignore ridicule of the Hebrew who kept it, the orthodox villagers who could on in the great change that had been wr some sort of madness which must end in catastrophe.

But the Stundists continued to mee after year, and slowly and surely added to their influence and nu When their position had been firmly lished, not only in Slavo, but in m neighboring village as well, old Kul died, but he had appointed Mikha son, as his successor. When our opens it was Mikhail who led the ists of Slavo,

Such was the village of the Ukra the early spring of the year 1877.

CHAPTER II.

A Court Lady.

If Slavo and the southern steppe pleasant in the spring sunshine, if was there putting on her vernal ga of green in those early days of Ap huge northern capital still remained s ed in its deep winter covering of sno great rivers and canals which ever intersect the city were still frozen. Th straight Nevsky Prospect, the Regen of St. Petersburg, looked its best, roadway was in magnificent condit sleighing, and everyone who knows sian city knows that when the slei out the city is at its gayest.

It was getting late in the afterno lofty spires of the admiralty, and polas of a hundred churches glo the red rays of the sinking sun; so long granite colonnades of the Ca of Our Lady of Kazan, and tho of windows as well flamed back the of the West. Pedestrians in a thic stream, and wrapped in furs, sa along the northern side of the nob where the principal shops are, an the Court quay by the Neva in fron huge red Winter Palace. It was a throng. No sign of want or poverty ed itself. The want and the pover hidden away in the thousands of lo rooms in the back streets.

Not far from the Admiralty end famous thoroughfare of the Nevsky a huge, palacelike structure faced with florid designs in stucco. Yo at a glance that a rich man had and that he had employed an artis tastes were vulgar and ostentatious plaster garlands of tropical fruits ar ers around the windows, and the and naked cupids supporting the incongruous among the frosts and f Petersburg. A long line of sleighs wa up before the palace, and every n then sleighs would dash up to the with jingle of silver bells, and disch furred officers or civilians. One c their ribbons and orders, their med gold lace, as with more than femine display they twitched the furs to to let the pedestrians get a glimpse quality. Counts and princes, gene state-councillors, and actual priv cillors, important chinovniki and departments came dashing up, so ladies accompanying them, but alone, for the ladies had arrived earl meek crowd around the gateway w in line by policemen who stood at lute as the greater notabilities pa

The occasion of all the bustle wa the Countess Olga Navrotska's receptions. These were among th famous of the social celebrations in ersburg, and invitations to atten were in far greater request than co to attend Court balls. At the lat was the probability of meeting n and women, people who, although enough in their own particular p and who may have rendered in service to the Empire, were neve people without distinction in society fathers and mothers were nobod whose French smacked of the public but at Countess Olga's, while one the distinguished honor of meeting personages — grand dukes, and serenities—one need never feel that vantage would be taken of your pre palm off on you some person of bubl tation who had only his abilities or services to recommend him. Th leading members of the most e Russian aristocracy who were no the Countess's magnificent rooms.

(To be Continued.)

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SERGEI AND THE STUNDIST'S SON.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

A Court Lady.

NO roof in the Russian capital covered that night a more distinguished company than the brilliant throng at the reception of the Countess Olga Navrotska. Anticipated before they occurred, talked of after they were past, these monthly receptions were events of almost national importance.

It was now twilight, and the great marble staircase and the suite of reception rooms were brilliantly lighted. Everything that wealth could purchase was here in lavish profusion. If the gorgeous "salons" were decorated with a splendor more barbaric than one finds in London or Paris, if more prominence was given to rich gildings, and crystal, and silken hangings than would suit the severer taste of the West, it must be remembered that in these matters, as in many another, Russia is the most westerly of Eastern countries, rather than the most easterly of Western.

But the great defect that one could not help noticing in these brilliant rooms was the utter want of homeliness. They were rooms for parades, with no sign of the taste of the owner, bare of nick-nacks and the little mementoes of travel, and friendship, and love. Away in a remote corner of the huge house there were two or three little rooms, dainty and homelike enough where the Countess lived. These grand "salons" were where she acted. On those she lavished taste and love, and the keenest sense of beauty. Art work and photographs, "bric-a-brac," to each article of which a story was attached, souvenirs of friends, books—all in the happy confusion, the orderly disorder that she loved. There she was mistress, and was at home. Perhaps she was no less at home on parade, as she called it, but she left the management of that half of her life to her majordomo and the upholsterers, affecting little interest in it, and feeling absolutely none.

Her life hitherto had been a varied one. Brought up in the strictest seclusion during her girlhood, in a school rigorously reserved for the daughters of nobles, she left it to become the wife of one of the wealthiest landowners in the Empire, Count Lyov Navrotsky. The Count was no longer young, and had formed objectionable tastes in his youth which he adhered to during his married life. Paris and Monte Carlo were his havens of rest when he grew tired of St. Petersburg and its monotonous distractions, and thither he took his girl-wife, acquainting her with phases of life which she had never even dreamt of, but the vacuity and vanity of which she was not slow to discover. No such feeling as love ever entered the hearts of either of them.

He was proud of his brilliant young wife, and of her dark, radiant beauty. He felt gratified when he looked at his magnificent rubies twined in her black hair. He was pleased that she could speak so many languages, that her music ravished the hearts of all hearers, and that she dressed to the envy of Frenchwomen. He liked to remember one starlit night when she sang a Russian ballad, accompanying herself on the piano, and as the sounds floated out into the hotel gardens how the crowd of wealthy pleasure-seekers flocked round the open casement in honest admiration of "la belle comtesse" and her perfect art. She had met hundreds of men who were only names to her, and who had repelled her by their openly-avowed admiration. She entertained a high ideal as to what a perfect gentleman should be, and her husband nearly reached it sometimes. He was gentle, generous, forgiving, a "bon vivant" it is true, but so were all men, she thought. He was perfectly dressed, and perfect in manners. He had been, moreover, a distinguished soldier, and Countess Olga, brought up in the society of soldiers' daughters, believed that no nobler profession than a soldier's could possibly exist. She kept his medals bright with her own hands, and when he went to Court, or otherwise had occasion to wear them, she fastened them on his breast with her own fair fingers, always touching with her lips the silver St. George's Cross which the Emperor himself had bestowed on the Count for signal bravery on the field of battle. But of the strong, deep stream of love there was no vestige, and the strangest part of this was that neither the Countess nor her husband knew of its absence, or felt the want of it.

They were married for two years when a chill caught by the Count in the uncertain climate of the Riviera brought on a series of disorders from which he never recovered. He returned to St. Petersburg, and for over a year he was nursed by his wife with an exemplary patience and skill beyond praise. He always did his best to alleviate the stress upon her, and, although at times suffering intolerable pain, he seldom uttered a petulant word or gave way to the carping querulousness of the sick. Indeed, in those last days, there was a light in his eyes, and an added tenderness in his voice which the young widow afterward often recalled with tears in her own eyes; and in her heart she believed that the worn out old soldier, the battered old roue, at last, and when it was too late, loved her with all his soul.

The Countess Olga was far too distinguished a person, and far too much in request both at Court and in her own circle of society, to be allowed to remain long in retirement; but when she appeared again it was noticed that although her beauty remained unimpaired, had indeed matured and developed, there was no longer any of that freshness and spring of girlhood which had charmed so many. Her capacity for happiness was in no sense diminished, but an added seriousness rather indicated that her visions of what true happiness was had become loftier and more refined, and that, alas! these visions were subjected to eternal disappointment. If the qualities of kindness, sympathy, tenderness, and goodness were there in richer measure than ever, they could not altogether conceal, indeed, they rather tended to place in bolder relief, the flaws that had also developed—want of purpose and self-government, greed for the praise of her fellows, inordinate, if pardonable, desire to be among those who are renowned. It was in this last characteristic that she drew apart from her surroundings, from men and women who had no ambition, no daring, no capacity for suffering, who had a holy horror either of rising above or sinking below the dead level of uniformity both of deed and thought that marked their narrow and selfish clique.

She stood in her drawing-room this April afternoon, among the throng of titled and dignified-looking nonentities, cool, self-possessed, restrained, appraising most of those around her at their true value, tolerant of their shortcomings it is true, but never failing to discern them.

There is a small and elderly gentleman in black buzzing beside her with a rose-colored order around his neck, and from time to time she listens, half amused, to his brisk, bird-like chirpings. The man's heart is utterly callous, without a particle of sensitiveness; he is obstinate as a mule, and hard and harsh. But he is making court to her by trying to enlist her sympathies for some great humanitarian scheme for feeding the poor of St. Petersburg with one solid meal of porridge a day. He has no feeling for the poor, he knows his scheme will come to nothing, but he is anxious for his hostess's approval, and collapses altogether when she says that she has far too much respect for the poor to make them dependent on the rich, or to expect much from their generosity.

So the little man flutters away, and, to an ancient lady at the other end of the room, expresses his grave doubts that Countess Olga is tainted with many pernicious novelties. But a fat, good-natured colonel of the Guards had overheard the Countess's remark, and asked her in simple terms what she would do if the people could find no work and were starving?

"Ah!" she replied, "I fear I would do nothing. I never have done anything. People have been starving since long before I was born. My own villagers are in want in a hundred ways, and what have I done? What can I do?"

"But we know to the contrary," said the smiling colonel. "We know your village is a model village, and that you gave away thousands to the poor."

"If I give my steward a thousand roubles, and ask him to distribute them among the deserving poor, for you will observe that it is only the deserving poor we help, the poor who give their humble duty and poor flattery in exchange for our alms—is this helping them in any true and just way? Do you know, Colonel, I would rather nurse a poor, working woman's baby for five minutes, and feel the pleasure of that act, than hand her five roubles? The money would corrupt her, harden her, make her greedy and calculating; if I take her child for a few minutes she feels that I'm a woman like herself, and she cries and is soft, and full of hope and courage."

The Countess broke into laughter at the perplexed face before her.

"Yes, yes, Colonel," she said, "I know you are thinking me very revolutionary and all that. I would not really dream of nursing the dirty little things; but I'm laughing at the idea of seeing you start on a career of reform on my lines. Think it over, and when you next go home, try your hand on the babies."

She walked over to where a tall man in a general's uniform stood. He was General Alekhin, her father's cousin, and for forty years his companion in arms. He had sharp features and watery eyes, and lines about his mouth and eyes that care and dissipation had deeply graven. She put her hand in his arm, and together they crossed the salon to an outer room where the guests were already departing. Privy councillors and great officers of state, and dames of high degree gradually filed past their hostess with a few lightly spoken words of farewell, and out into the brilliant starlit evening where the hubbub and stir of departure had collected the same inane crowd of sightseers that had witnessed the arrivals. The General was the last to leave, and when he was gone, Countess Olga Navrotska retired to her own room, flung off her rubies and her magnificent attire, and sat long in deep thought that ended in nothing more effectual than tears.

CHAPTER III.

Two Dragoons and their Uncle.

General Alekhin was a man who had spent his sixty odd years of life in doing nothing. Born to a fine estate, with undoubted powers, and plunged in early life into the vortices of fashion and affairs he had had unrivalled opportunities of making a name for himself, and of benefiting in great degree either the circle in which he habitually moved or the numerous people depending on him. But he preferred to remain a fine gentleman, a man about town, a flutterer about the court. He had made light and ornamental positions, living always full in the eyes of the public that had entailed enormous expenditure on him. Long before he had reached his prime he had plunged in the gravest financial difficulties.

From that time began his rapid fall. The taste of the bitterness of life was not new to his moral nature, and he began to drink late between wild outbreaks of frenzied pleasure-seeking and dark periods of oppressive introspection.

He knew he was a failure, the most terrible of all knowledge, and all that he had left sensible of now was the hardly varying record of his own sin and folly. Thumbing over this most dismal of all records he had few illusions left about himself, and at last, at the end of his days, the sight of pictures in which he could not or dared not take part moved him at times to a state of madness.

He would frequently fly to the contemplation of religion, and more than once lay all night on a penitential hair shirt in the very chilly morning and went to a holy monk of established reputation for sanctity, to confess his sins and seek pardon. There were periods when the terror of an avenging deity was so present with him that he would confine himself into his room for days, and the superstitious notion was low enough on the absurd enough to practise to avert the wrath of an angry God. He had not married in early life, holding women in contempt and hating the restraints which marriage should impose.

But even in middle life he might have got over these objections. Like so many of his set he might have settled down to the dull decorum of the life of his married friends, and varied it with the usual flirtations, intrigues, had there not been the ever-present memory of a terrible sin of years ago which haunted him, and which always quelled his gaiety even its wildest outbursts.

No one knew about that past but himself and his confessor, but this did not help him to bear the burden of it with greater ease, and often in the panic of his fits of remorse he felt tempted to tell the world what he had done, and then to skulk away from the world forever, and hide his head in the silent monastery where his friend the monk would minister to his soul's comfort for the short remainder of his days.

In all the turmoil and trouble of his life, in all his alternations of forced gaiety and profound gloom, he had kept a tender place of affection for his two nephews, the sons of a long-deceased brother. If he had only an ordinary liking for Sergei the younger, he lavished on his brother Vladimir the warmth of love which his seared and withered heart contained. He was living in the old house of his father's at Lavra when the two boys were brought to him by their dying mother. He had never wished to be saddled with these encumbrances, for he could not but feel that he was poor mentor to youth, and that he would be next to impossible to fill the duties of conscientious guardian. But he promised to take care of them, to educate and start them on the world.

With Sergei his task was easy enough. From the first the boy was strong, self-reliant, independent, and although his youthful escapades were numerous enough, they were never vicious, in the mean. The German tutor on whom devolved most of the responsibilities of guardianship took to him at once and gave him much of his disinclination to study, because of his frank genial ways and his entire freedom from everything that was false. The great handsome fair-haired youth was adored by the villagers. He knew every one's cottage and strip of land, how many horses and dogs each peasant possessed; and on his idle days, and they were frequent, he wrestled, swam, fished, and hunted rats with the village boys, obtaining a deep insight into the life of the place, and loving with all his simple heart everything that was pure, and natural, and true among those humble friends of his.

Young Mikhail Kulmenko, the Stundist's son, was his chief companion, a serious-minded and refined youth, and there were times when these two would separate themselves from the rest of their companions, and in long walks through the breezy steppe, or down among the reeds fringing the river, would hold converse on things that lifted their young hearts high above earth.

(To be continued.)

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BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

THE HAPPINESS OF HALF THE VILLAGE WAS IN HIS KEEPING.

CHAPTER III.—*(Continued.)*

The Two Dragoons.

PERHAPS no greater contrast could well be imagined than the careers of these two brothers, Sergei and Vladimir, beginning, as it were, from the same starting-point. Vladimir, the elder of the two by a year, had from the first the affection of the General in a far greater degree than his brother. His every whim was gratified. During their boyhood Sergei would be left in Slavo while he was selected to accompany the General on his visits to the capital, and uncle and nephew used to perambulate the toy-shops and confectioners, making lavish purchases of the articles dear to the hearts of boys. But the purchases were for Vladimir; Sergei was always left out in the cold. Often enough such tactless management led to quarrel and combat between the boys, and as Vladimir usually came off second best in these trials of strength, he would run to his uncle with bitter complaints and untrue stories of their cause. Sergei accepted his punishment in silence and bore no malice.

Vladimir avoided intimacy with the young men of the village, never participated in any of their sports, and seldom visited their cottages. He scorned them and their ways with the inbred feeling of the aristocrat, and he boasted his ignorance of their names.

If Sergei was slovenly in his methods of study, Vladimir was all that the German tutor desired. The youth indeed had early determined to get on in the world. All his studies were directed with this object in view, and in his now rarer visits to St. Petersburg, he precociously did all in his power to ingratiate himself with those who might be of service to him hereafter. But it was at home in Slavo that the development of his character was most clearly displayed.

It would not be accurate to say that he was altogether companionless in the village. The village Jew, Haim Rosenberg, was a friend of his, so was Piotr Sozontieff, the "Old Ritualist," in charge of the ferry. The Jew was the curse of the village, helped to be a curse by the improvidence and intemperance of the villagers. He kept the grog-shop and sold poisonous "vodka." The happiness or the misery of half the village was in his keeping, for there was hardly a peasant in Slavo, except the Stundists, who was not more or less in his debt. The wily Hebrew took swift advantage of their embarrassment, and lent them money at ruinous rates of interest; and as the interest was seldom paid, mortgages and foreclosures were matters of frequent occurrence. Haim had no morals and no pity. He encouraged the village children to bring him pockets-full of grain and eggs which they would pilfer from their parents, and for these he would reward the boys with bad cigarettes, and the girls with trumpery bits of bright ribbon. The conscience of every child he came in contact with was deadened, and they contracted habits, some of which would cling to them through life.

It was not, however, in his capacity of saloon-keeper that young Vladimir visited Haim. In some way or another the youth had contracted a passion for card-playing, probably from seeing the General so addicted to it, and as the Jew was the only person in the village who cared to risk his money, the grog-shop became his usual morning haunt. At first he won, but gradually the luck changed, and he lost heavily, and continued to lose. He soon got rid of his ready money, and then promises and post obits passed rapidly into the Jew's hands. It ended in Vladimir being overwhelmed with debt, and not knowing where to turn to find money in satisfaction of his remorseless creditor's demands.

But in addition to Haim's "kabak," Vladimir apparently found congenial society down at the ferry in the cottage of the "Old Ritualist." Between Vladimir and the ferryman there was nothing in common, unless, perhaps, it was a mutual hatred of the Stundists. This, however, had nothing to do with the young man's reason for haunting the riverside. Sozontieff had a daughter who was beyond comparison the prettiest girl in the village, and for her Vladimir had conceived a most violent attachment. She was bright and intelligent, and probably the only girl for miles round who could read and write. Pretending to be interested in the Old Ritualist's tales about his sect, and the persecutions its members had suffered, Vladimir would sit for hours in the old tumble-down "izba," and watch the fair girl as she went about her household duties. He met her often along the river, and charmed with his handsome dark face and glib tongue, she gave him ever fresh opportunities of seeing her. He read amatory French poetry and translated it into Russian for her, but she was only amused at this; he brought her roses from the General's garden, and little trinkets that had been his dead mother's—the roses touched her, and she hid them away from her father's eyes, and looked at them sometimes, wondering what the young "barin" meant.

Sozontieff, deep in the mysteries of his religion, never saw what was going on, and never suspected that Vladimir would condescend to notice his daughter, or that she would so far forget her station and her father's honor as to give heed to his addresses. When the time at last came that Vladimir was to proceed to the military school, which he did a year before his brother, he took the girl to a secluded spot along the river, and vowed eternal fidelity to her, promising to visit Slavo often, to write often, and when he had finished the academy to marry her. She smiled, pleased, but was not sure if she believed him.

Vladimir's career in St. Petersburg was as unprincipled as he dared to make it. When Haim Rosenberg could not or would not send him money there were others of Haim's class who were only too ready to come to his assistance. Of course the young cadet sank deeper and deeper into the mire. But he was far too astute to fall in the eyes of his world. His tutors and most of his companions looked on him as a hardworking and studious fellow who was a model of all the virtues; and the best houses in St. Petersburg were open to the handsome, modest-looking youth who was so attached to his profession, and before whom so fair a prospect was opening. At last he joined his regiment—the same to which Sergei was afterwards attached, and launched out into the world.

He was young only in years. He was able, unprincipled, dexterous, and had an insight into men and their motives learnt in the worst possible schools. He swindled the old General in money matters, he even managed to swindle the Jews. He seemed to fear nobody, and he believed nothing, laughing at the tremendous riddle of life that people puzzled over.

The General felt proud of him, proud of his hard, false, glittering nephew. Every winter Vladimir visited Slavo when he was on his way south to the General's villa on the southern coast of the Crimea. He would then renew his ardent love-making to Sozontieff's daughter, who had begun to long for his coming. She often wondered why he let the years run on without making good his plighted word, but he only renewed his promises, sealing them with fresh oaths. For a day or two at a time he could tolerate Slavo, but he was always glad at last to hasten away from the bare steppe village, and take refuge among the cypress and myrtle groves of the south, where there were pleasant garden parties, and music, and warmth, and rich wines, and charm-

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CHAPTER IV.

The Countess's Ideals.

On the eve of Olga Navrotska's recepti, Vladimir arrived in town from the Crnea, where he had been spending the winter. Although St. Petersburg is at gayest in winter, Vladimir hated the frst and snow, it ate into his bones, so h took his winter's pleasuring in the south. As he drove to his uncle's apartments he was disgusted to find deep snow s on the ground, and a warmth in the a that foreboded a thaw and slushy sets. He allowed himself to be vexed by tse trifles. He kept thinking, besides, ois winter's card-playing, and the heavy les he had incurred; and the more he thought of this the more difficult it seemed to find a way out of his perplexities. He was, therefore, not in the happiest of humors when ushered into the General's presence to receive the usual kiss which was old man's way of greeting him.

"You're welcome back to Petersburg, dear boy," said the General. "The winter has seemed doubly long without you. Are you better and stronger? You're not looking at all well. I hope you took my advice about the white Vorontsovka. I assure you it's only vinegar. Stick to the red, there's blood in that. Did you look up Madame Voronin and Princess Gagarine? They're splendid women. How's old Boris Vasilitch? His girl must be rather pretty now?" And so on, through a string of foolish, empty questions. The General inquired about old friends and old haunts, and about Vladimir's doings. The young man vouchsafed only the most laconic answers, and his anxious relative could not but notice that something was wrong.

"Cheer up, Vladimir, you're back now, and I fancy you'll have a gay spring. I have just got home from a reception at Olga Navrotska's. Ah, that's a woman! She was asking about you, and what you intended doing. She's interested in you, believe me. She thought you should not absent yourself so long from your duties in Petersburg, and that Yalta was relaxing. Vlodia, my boy, we have talked about this before; let us talk about it again. She has millions. You have only to ask her and she's yours."

"Look here, uncle, do you really think I have any chance there? We're very intimate, and all that, but somehow she only lets me dance with her, and talk about the most ordinary things in a way that anybody might hear. As soon as I get serious she laughs, and I have been very serious with her at times. I have a notion she cares more for Sergei than for me, although my respected and much-beloved brother is a fatoo great an ass to have noticed it."

"Well, take my advice, Valodia, try your hand and you'll win. You know the French proverb. Go to-morrow and pay your first call; go early and you'll get a chance with her alone. If you play your cards well you'll win."

"I had intended going to-morrow. I must really do something. I'm smothered in overdue bills. I can't breathe. Jews and Christians, Armenians and Tartars, they're all at me at once; and that rascal Him—I suppose you know he has opened an exchange office in Kief?—threatens to expose me if I don't pay him a couple of thousand at once. I suppose there's no use trying to get anything out of you?"

"Not the least, dear boy; very sorry. I'm swept out. Yes, you had better go and settle it over. Don't go whining and crying in to her, but do it boldly. Carry the outposts with a dash, my boy, and the fortress will not hold out a minute. God bless you! Good-night, good-night!" The General resumed his funny French novel which was to be exchanged in an hour's time for a manual of devotion, and Vladimir drove home to think it out.

He did a good deal of thinking that night. The Countess Olga and her millions were at first uppermost in his mind, and he thought that even without her millions she was quite out of his reach. Sergei has a chance there, he thought. Still, his uncle was a sharp old fellow, and knew all about women. And then he thought of the fine shiny times in Yalta, and the pleasant little supper, and the red and white Vorontsovka, and the invalid women who fascinated him. And then his thoughts wandered to Slavo, although he tried hard to keep them on Olga Navrotska, or on the pleasures of Yalta. He even preferred to think of his threatening Jew creditor. But he would always involuntarily hark back to Slavo, and to the house at the ferry. He felt that there was trouble brewing, and the image of the girl haunted him, and the stern stormy eyes of her father haunted him, and the face of the young Stundist preacher who, he thought, loved the girl, haunted him.

It was a restless night, full of terrible visions that could not be driven away. Ah, that girl! If he could only get her out of his mind. But she was there when he rose next day, and her image seemed stamped with a fearful and indelible pressure on his brain. He wondered if there were such things as premonitions or presentiments.

Still he dressed himself carefully in his newest uniform, and set out to visit the Countess, and if opportunity offered to begin the assault which according to the General was to end in a speedy surrender of her heart and her millions. He was received with the utmost cordiality, for the Countess liked him as a man of the world who was always bright and intelligent, and who could talk reasonably, sometimes profoundly, on a variety of interesting topics. She knew little or nothing of the shady side of his character, of his moral turpitude, of the things which besmirched his honor.

If she guessed anything she never once showed it, and to all outward appearance was more than pleased to see him.

"Why, Vladimir Alexeitch, is it you? We have been expecting you for so long. I do hope you are better?"

Vladimir always made a point of his indifferent health in his dealings with women. He had a notion that it interested them in him. A man in poor health, yet sacrificing himself to duty and to the service of the Tsar—that was his idea.

"Yes, thanks, I feel much stronger. The sea-air revived me greatly after last summer's hard work. But I was so anxious to get back. I always feel when I'm away that my friends are in danger of forgetting me."

That is a poor compliment you pay yourself, Vladimir Alexeitch."

"Yes, Countess, I know, but I feel that friendship is a thing that wants coaxing and nourishing. Absence starves it, shrivels it up. Perhaps there may be exceptions or you would not shake your head. I know well, Countess, that you are not a friend who is hot to-day and cold to-morrow. You are so true that everything and every one who comes in contact with you is sanctified and refined."

"Why, Vladimir Alexeitch, I declare you are beginning to take most serious views of things. You'll be ill again if you do. Poor Colonel Pevtsoff told me last night that he's so fat and strong because he never worries about things."

"Countess, I am serious to-day. I have come here so early because I wish to speak to you alone. I have known you for years, and every day that passes makes me feel that I must know you better. I love you, Countess; I love you with my whole heart. Forgive me, I know I'm not worthy of you but I'll try to become worthy."

"Stop, stop," laughingly interrupted the Countess. "Isn't this all very new and sudden? Hadn't we better change the subject? Have you really thought about this for a very long time? I must say you have been wonderfully successful in dissembling your passion."

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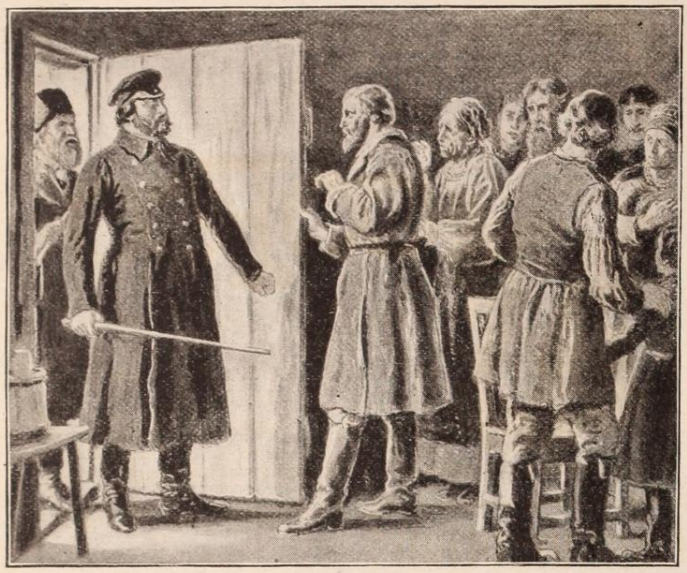
...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.



THE INTERRUPTED STUNDIST MEETING.

CHAPTER IV.—*(Continued.)*

The Countess's Ideals.

THE laugh of the Countess disconcerted Vladimir. It was hard to have his protestations ridiculed. He looked at her reproachfully and asked, "Countess, why should you laugh at me?"

"I laugh at you, Vladimir Alexeitch, because you are so amusing. Now don't try to hoodwink me by protestation. Let me speak, please. You don't love me—if you do it has come on far too suddenly, and you should think it over again. I don't love you, and I'm not going to marry you until I do. I dare say you are a good enough and a clever enough sort of man, but somehow, Vladimir Alexeitch you don't come up to my ideal of what my husband must be. Mind you, I have thought of marrying again."

"Perhaps you would tell me what it is you think I lack. If I only knew I would work like a slave to obtain it."

"Well, Vladimir Alexeitch, I know more about you than you think I do. Don't start in that way. I'll tell nobody; I won't even tell you. You wish to know what it is you lack. That also I will not say; but I'll tell you what that particular man must have and must be who gets my consent to be his wife. Vladimir Alexeitch, he must be a man. Do you know what that means? Not a male person, remember, but a man. He must be great, strong, generous; a noble, strong, generous soldier and servant of our Tsar and our fatherland. Generous and true he must be, Vladimir Alexeitch. I always know a true man when I see him. Don't look so glum, my friend; I did not say you were not true. Then my husband must be self-sacrificing, be willing to sacrifice himself, his rest, his comfort, his luxuries for the sake of others. And he must have the power to make me what he is himself. I would rather die, Vladimir Alexeitch, than have a husband who would drag me down to his own level. He must raise me to his. And he must support me in my life, and he must sympathize with me, and if he is a man like this I'll love him—oh, I'll love him as—as—as no man was ever loved before."

Vladimir was pale and silent, and he sat gloomily watching the carpet and nervously twiddling his sword knot. The Countess was flushed, her eyes sparkled with a brilliant light. She rose to her feet.

"The husband that I marry, Vladimir Alexeitch must love the people—the poor, the oppressed people. He will call them in his heart brothers and sisters. Vladimir Alexeitch, you have lived for years in Slavo. I know Slavo very well. You know how often I go across from Krasnaya-Balka. Have you made the people there love you? Do you love them? Have they ever done you a wrong? Have you ever done any of them a wrong?"

Vladimir rose and his face became livid. "Countess, what do you mean? A wrong? No, certainly not. I have done them no wrong. What wrong?" His voice was thin, and he kept his eyes away from the radiant face before him.

"Well, Vladimir Alexeitch, you know best. But you have some of the noblest people in the world in Slavo. Do you know young Kulmenko? No?"

"I hardly know the fellow by sight even," stammered Vladimir.

"Well, I'll pass that. What was I saying? Yes, my husband will esteem it an honor to know men like Kulmenko and his friends, men whom, I dare say, you heartily despise. And he must sympathize with them, and help them, and protect them. There's the bell ringing, and that means visitors. Just a last word. Never utter a syllable to me about love until you feel in your own heart that you are a better man, a truer man, a more generous man, loving your brothers and sisters as you love yourself. When you are conscious of something like this, and if you then feel as you say you do now, come to me, and we'll talk matters over together."

She held out her hand and Vladimir took it, raising his troubled eyes for a moment to her face. He stooped and touched her fingers with his lips.

CHAPTER V.

A Village Autocrat.

On the Saturday night succeeding the events related in the last chapter, Mikhail Kulmenko, the young Stundist of Slavo, was passing quickly from house to house delivering a message to his Stundist friends. He had heard that the local commissary of police, the inveterate foe of the sect, who used the authority with which he was clothed to persecute them, unknown to the Czar, was absent from Slavo and would not return for a few days. It was a good opportunity for a meeting. The only way of calling one was to personally visit every member. There was no bell to ring, and if there had been, it would have been imprudent to ring it, for the commissary had strictly forbidden all Stundist meetings, and they were therefore held in secrecy. Mikhail was tramping about the village till a late hour, leaving at every house he visited word that a meeting for prayer and preaching would be held at his house the next morning at six o'clock. He added that they need not fear to come, as the dreaded "Uriadnik" was far away.

And so the next morning at the appointed hour there was near a hundred men, women, and children crowded into the three connecting rooms of the preacher's cottage. There were seats enough for the women and children, and there was standing-room for the men. An earnest, solemn gravity sat on every face. These men and women knew the meaning of the word persecution; the smell of its fires had passed upon them. They had borne its assault, and were prepared to bear it again.

Kulmenko opened the meeting with a brief prayer, begging for grace and strength, for wisdom and patience. He prayed, too, for their beloved land and for its mighty ruler, and for all in authority. A hearty "Amen" followed from many lips as the preacher rose from his knees. Then there was the singing of a hymn in soft, low strains, the music and the words translated and adapted from the German by Kulmenko himself.

It was like a family gathering more than a public service. These men and women knew each other well and their common peril had drawn them near to each other in a common affection. Kulmenko himself observed no formality. He asked Vassily Pavlitch to speak to the brethren, saying that he had recent troubles which hung heavily on his spirit, and would be glad if his brother in Christ would speak as the Spirit of the Lord moved him. But Vassily Pavlitch was not the man to speak when the gifted young preacher was present. He said they were all in trouble, and would hear brother Michail's talk gladly whatever it might be. So Kulmenko opened his New Testament and read a chapter from the Gospels.

But there was to be no preaching that morning. Kulmenko had not uttered many words of his discourse, when Vassily Pavlitch, whose seat commanded a view of the hill-road from the cottage-window, interrupted the speaker by a cry that their beloved friend, Panitch Sergei, was coming down the path.

The meeting was all at once thrown into a condition of ebullient delight. The children caught the contagion and clapped their hands—they all knew or had heard of Sergei. Mikhail was running up the long hill to meet him, and his old mother had fled to the kitchen to boil the "samovar" for tea, and round the door crowded the smiling throng of villagers waiting the coming of their young master whom they loved so dearly. He had been long absent from Slavo, and now that he was in their midst again they sought to show him how dear he was to them.

"Little Panitch, you make my heart glad! Little brother, you make my eyes dance!"

Sergei was anything but little. He was a great stalwart man with magnificent shoulders and a stride and bearing like a knight in chivalry. But the villagers called him "little" because they loved him, and because they had caressed him when he was a child. And now when he stood in the centre of Mikhail's room, head and shoulders above any of them, one touched his tunic and another stroked his back, while the boys examined his gilt buttons, looking wonderingly at the huge sabre at his side and the spurs that jingled as he moved his feet.

"I'm sorry, friends, if I have interrupted the service," began Sergei, "but I got here last night from Petersburg with my uncle and my brother, and as I was looking out of my window this morning I saw you all come to Mikhail's. I knew there was a meeting, and I came down to see you all together."

"We're all glad to see you, Panitch," said Mikhail, "and I was just beginning the sermon when Vassily Pavlitch noticed you coming down the hill. Won't you say something instead?"

"Not now, brother—not now." Sergei's face grew serious. "I have tremendous news to tell you. War is declared!"

"War!" exclaimed the peasants in chorus. "War! What for? Against whom?"

"Another war?" gasped out an old man in the corner. "I know what war is. I was in the Crimea. Is it the English and French again?"

"No," Sergei replied, "the Turks. I don't know much about it myself, but I heard people talking in Petersburg, and I read a little about it in the newspapers. It seems the Turks have been treating their Christian subjects very badly. Some of the things I heard, I can hardly belive. Villages are burnt down, and the miserable

(Continued on page 533.)

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Has been my affliction from childhood. It was caused by impure blood and every spring I was sure to have a long spell and my general health would give way. Doctors did me little good and I became despondent. Last spring erysipelas settled in my eyes and I became totally blind for several weeks. Hood's Sarsaparilla was recommended and after taking one bottle my sight gradually returned, my blood became purified and I was restored to good health. With Hood's Sarsaparilla on hand I feel armed to meet any foe." MISS LULA LEE, 144 Market St., Memphis, Tenn.

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Take Thyroidine, extract of the thyroid gland, in three-drop doses, twice daily on the tongue.

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Mrs. J. N. A., Canaseraga, N. Y.—I will you please prescribe a remedy for flashes of heat followed by profuse perspiration, also extreme nervousness?

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...ligarians in trying to get away from their ...mingly cottages are shot down by the ...shi-bazouks, or knocked on the head by ...krish police. The unfortunate Christians ...e in terror of their lives, and I hear they ...e not allowed to worship in peace."

"Why not?" asked a boy who had been ...attentive listener, "are they Stundists?"

This was an awkward question, but ...Sergei arried it.

"No, 'go'oubtchick,' but they have a ...erfect right to worship God as they think ...although the rulers of the country are ...a different faith. The Turks are Mo...hammedans."

"Then so have we a right," said the boy ...with flushed cheeks. "Why are we not al...lowed to worship God as we think fit? ...Our rulers are not Mohammedans."

"But, boy, don't be rash," broke in the ...voice of the boy's mother; "these are ...matters you don't understand."

"And will Panitch also go to the war?" ...asked ...assily Pavlitch. "Will he also ...have a share in this war of freedom? If ...Mitch goes I will go also." Vassily was ...old man, and everyone smiled at his ...warmth and enthusiasm.

"Yes," replied Sergei, "my regiment is ...ordered to the front, and we have come ...home for a few days while the men ...are getting ready. We'll join them in Kief ...in a day or two."

"Tell us how war was declared," broke ...the teacher's quiet voice.

Sergei resumed—

"When our Lord the Emperor tried by every ...means his power to obtain justice and ...equity for the Bulgarians, and for the other ...Christians under the rule of the Turks, but ...it was no use. Things got worse instead ...of better. The whole of Russia began talk...ing, and got wild with rage that people of ...our own faith as themselves should be so ...cruelly treated by Mohammedans."

"He then wanted to speak again, but was ...checked by his mother. Everyone knew, ...however, what he would say.

"And so our Lord the Emperor, God ...bless him, was moved to declare war ...against the Turks, and everybody in Pet...rograd and Moscow and the town is mad ...with delight. I don't suppose very many ...of the peasants know yet awhile, although ...we shall have to do all the fighting. Still ...there will be a glorious war if any war can ...be called, and I for one pray God bless the ...Czar, a God bless the Czar's armies."

"God bless him! God bless him!" mur...mured the Stundists in unison and with ...tears in their eyes.

"It was all startling news for the vil...lagers, a bolt out of the blue. They hated ...and opposed to Christ's teachings. They ...believed that nations ought to and could ...settle disputes without appealing to ...arbitration of the sword. They knew ...what war meant of loss and misery to ...families. Some of their young men ...and boy would be probably drafted into ...the ranks, ordered to the front; some of ...them would perhaps die awful deaths, and ...people at home would mourn them for ...years, and never think there was any glory ...in the death of their boys to compensate ...them for their loss; the fields would not be ...tilled as they ought to be; there would ...be anxiety and unrest among the people; ...and there would be the cruel and vindictive ...passions always cultivated by a nation at ...war.

"There were the simple considerations ...that took hold of their minds, and that ...they talked over together.

"Nicholas's mother came in with the "sam...ovar" as Sergei was taking his leave, but ...could not induce him to stay and take a ...glass of tea, so the little gathering, instead ...of which Mikhail to resume his interrupt...ed story, stood around in groups, some of ...them with a glass of tea in one hand and a ...cigar in the other. They discussed ...coming war, feeling sad and heavy-...hearted.

"They had come to the conclusion that ...war might almost be called a just one, ...that they would be right in doing with ...their might all that they could in defense of ...their Christian brethern in Bulgaria, when ...a loud hammering at the door startled them. ...It was so sudden and unexpected that a ...cry escaped.

"Who is there?" demanded Mikhail.

"'It is I, Kriadnik.' Open in the Emperor's ...name! What do you mean by crowding to...gether at this time of the morning?

"'Ivan, I say!'

"Nicholas opened the door and a burly, ...bearded man, who had evidently been ...running, staggered in, followed by ...Nicholas's father, or village elder.

"So you thought I was gone, did you? I got back, you see, just in time. Praying again in unlawful hours and in unlicensed houses. This is honoring God and the Czar, eh? Ha, ha! Take that." He struck Mikhail a heavy blow between the eyes, and the young man staggered back to the wall.

The cowed peasants rushed out in a tumult crying and terror-stricken, children and their parents tumbling over one another in the narrow doorway. The two ruffians then began to fling the benches, chairs, and crockery out of the window and door—Mikhail and his mother in vain imploring them to desist. When they had sufficiently wreaked their vengeance, the two executive officers reeled out of the house, roaring with laughter at the memory of the terror-stricken faces of the Stundists.

When they were gone Mikhail and his mother collected the broken furniture and things, and patiently sought to put the house to rights again. "That's the fourth time," the old woman moaned, and buried her face in her apron. Mikhail watched the departing officers of the law.

(To be Continued.)

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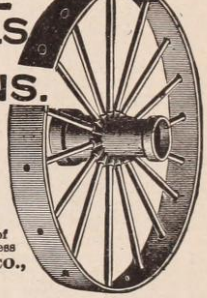

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...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

"BE A GOOD, BRAVE WOMAN."

CHAPTER VI.

Sergei Says Farewell.

THE morning after her reception Countess Olga Navrotska rose tired and out of sorts.

It was by no means the first time that this feeling of weariness had prostrated her. Perhaps it was hardly so much weariness as dissatisfaction with her surroundings that worried her, but she hated sitting down to find out which it was. She hated introspection, for she felt that in her case it would only reveal a very empty life, and that candor with herself could only result in making her more miserable still. She knew herself to be the slave of her surroundings, of her conventional friends, and their ways of life and thought, and with all her undoubted courage and resource she dreaded any break with them which would get her talked about and misrepresented, or bring upon her the ridicule of the world in which she lived.

"If I only had strength to rise above it all?" she sighed to herself, that April morning. "If only I had some one to whom I could open my heart, and tell how empty it is, and how I long to have it filled with some great sympathies, some great love, some great work, that would get me out of and away from myself!"

She went over to her book-case and took out a French life of St. Catherine of Siena, and an English life of St. Francis of Assisi, and turned over their pages and shook her head.

"That is not what I want," she said to herself, "that is all mediæval and far away—oh, so far away! How would that suit St. Petersburg? Not at all. People's wants are so numerous and complicated nowadays."

But she read on and grew interested in the simple lives of Italian peasants, in the details of Catherine's home life, in those very simple desires and aims respecting which St. Petersburg society knew little, and cared less. And then came an inexpressible longing to get away from the distractions of the city, from folly and fashion and from all the futilities of her past life, a longing to lead a natural life among the simple people on the steppe, whose hearts were still soft, whose tongues were still single, whose eyes were often lifted above the earth and earthly things, whose life, no matter how sordid its ways and how squalid its conditions might seem to the mere worldling, yet in her eyes bore dewdrops and lustre that the sun illuminated at times.

"Ah, the consecrating powers of nature!" she thought, "may I be found worthy to know it."

The Countess was a woman who could speedily make up her mind when she liked. She decided to leave St. Petersburg as soon as possible, and her decision was made without a pang; indeed a great rushing feeling of relief came over her as though some heavy load had been lifted from her heart. There was a great ball at the Winter Palace that had been looked forward to, a reception at a Grand Duchess's, a banquet at an ambassador's, all of which she had either arranged or had promised to attend, but she incontinently threw them all over, and only thought of her Krasnaya Balka, the great farm near Kief where she had beautiful gardens and orchards and hundreds of peasants' cottages full of people whom she would try to love with her whole heart.

Krasnaya Balka, she reflected, was only a short day's drive from Kief, and not half that distance from Slavo. She thought long about the holy city, and wondered whether she would not visit some of the shrines there before she settled in Krasnaya Balka. She decided she would, and felt sorry that her heart hitherto seemed to have had all thoughts of holy things banished from it. And when she thought of her neighborhood to Slavo it was with a queer undefined feeling in her heart. She had been over to the Alekhins' village several times already, and knew some of the peasants there—Mikhail Kulmenko among others. She was interested in the Stundists, and had been quick to perceive the natural and moral differences between them and the other villagers. It was part of her plans for the future to see more of them. But there was something else that stirred her. Vladimir and Sergei would probably be there sometimes, and they would come over to see her at Krasnaya Balka. She had a curiosity to watch Vladimir, and notice any improvement in his disposition and conduct. She felt, besides, more than interested in Sergei's strong character, and wished to see him among his own people, and she knew he loved them and had determined to come oftener among them.

It was when she went next day to say good-bye to Colonel and Mrs. Pevtsoff that the Countess first heard that war had been declared against Turkey, and that the dragoons were to go to the front, the Alekhins' regiment as well. The Countess quickly caught the prevailing contagion, and her enthusiasm for the Czar and the cause which he had espoused, knew no bounds.

"How noble, how good of him!" she thought; "Russia will now show to Europe that in deed and in truth she has the welfare of her co-religionists at heart, and that it is not selfishness or deep-laid schemes of self-aggrandizement which urge her on."

She was very patriotic, and believed in her country and its destiny. The news of the declaration of hostility hastened her departure. She could not bear to stay on and see the anxious weeping women and the departing officers, so she hurried on to Kief intending to pray for them all.

What a resting place she found Krasnaya Balka. It was a farm left to her by her late husband—his favorite country retreat on which he had lavished great wealth and considerable taste. A few mornings after her arrival she went out for the first time. Everything was fresh and bright and green, and she let the emotions begotten by the entire tranquility of the scene filter into her soul. There were long allevs of noble trees, and broad stretches of half-wild lawn, and an English garden, with old brown brick walls around it, supporting fruit trees ablaze with blossom. Opening into the garden were little wrought-iron wickets that were rusty, and creaked on their hinges, but they were beautiful, and the Countess knew it.

She ran down to the lake, and looked at the stately swans sailing on it, and she stood before the old marble sun-dial, comparing its record with her watch. She smiled up at the mossy-coated marble garden nymphs scattered here and there; she chatted with the gardeners at their work.

Krasnaya Balka seemed somehow new to her this morning; she had never found it half so interesting before, and her heart danced as a child's heart dances when he is realizing some long looked-for happiness, and can hardly believe it is real yet.

Ah, it was not altogether the English garden and its apple-blossom, nor the lake with its proud swans that filled the Countess's heart with so much pleasure and joy in life. Perhaps these sweet and gracious things had great share in it, but there was something else that had a greater share still. A gloom that would not lift had settled upon her immediately on reaching Krasnaya Balka, and here it was lifted at last, and by such insignificant means that she laughed to herself as she thought of it. It was a little note in her pocket which she had received late on the previous night that had banished her gloom, rousing her to life and action, and filling her heart with sensations which were as yet inscrutable, and whose existence was unimagined. In the note itself there was not much. It ran thus:

"DEAR COUNTESS:—When I called at your house in Petersburg to say good-bye, I was told that you had gone to Krasnaya Balka. Will you please not take it as an intrusion if I call to-morrow morning? Volodia and I arrived at Slavo last night with uncle. Yours, SERGEI ALEKHIN."

"P. S.—Volodia and I leave for the front the day after to-morrow."

Yes, she would be glad to see Sergei—his frank, genial ways always did her good. She knew, besides, that under a somewhat careless and lazy exterior he owned qualities of heart and head that were as rare as they were valuable. She had seen more of Vladimir than of his brother. She had met him everywhere in society, and in her society moods she had always sought him to be entertained by his bright and witty talk, and his caustic judgments on men and men's foibles. Sergei she never met in this way. He hated balls and parties, and never would learn to dance. He had an idea that he looked thoroughly silly and ungainly when threading the mazes of some intricate cotillion. He despised heartily the ideas and ideals of society, and when he wanted relaxation or pleasure, he found it in long gallops in the parks or suburbs, in an hour's hard work at his table, rather than a heated ball-room at midnight amidst the silly, worldly talk

(Continued on page 549.)

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of the sinful, worldly people to be found there.

Among all the crowd of people whom Sergei knew in St. Petersburg, there was not one to whom he felt drawn, and who he felt certain was better than her surroundings. He thought of her often, and always with a glow in his heart. Sometimes a feeling for her akin to pity seized possession of him, and he wished that he could so intrude upon her as to hint that there were grander views of life and conduct to which she might attain. But Sergei never ventured so bold an attitude towards the beautiful Countess, and as he felt he could not and dare not interfere with her and with the life he thought she had marked out for herself, he kept away from her circle for the risk of being thought uncivilized. In addition there was some sort of pride, a false pride if you will, which kept him away from the Countess. He was poor, and old general dealing out a most niggard allowance to him in order that Vladimir might live in affluence. He knew that the enormous wealth of the Countess was perhaps a more tempting bait to the crowd of men who surrounded her than her exquisite beauty and the supreme qualities of heart and intellect with which she was undoubtedly endowed.

"Ah, if she were only as poor as I am," thought the young soldier, "better still if she were poorer!"

He never once wished to be as rich as she was. When he called at the great palace on the Nevsky Prospect to say goodby and heard that she had gone to Krasnaya Balka, he felt relieved. He hated the thought of the city life, and he believed that Olga Navrotska in the country and among the villagers would have opportunity for accomplishing the growth of the great powers of good which the city only stunted or made sickly. He would see her in the country, he thought, and before he said goodby—perhaps forever—for who could tell the fortune of war?—he would seek to put some higher ideals before her than these social ambitions and empty futilities which had been forced so much upon her in St. Petersburg.

Full of such thoughts he rode slowly up the long avenue of beeches at Krasnaya Balka to the house. One or two peasants whom he took off their caps and bowed low to him passed. He had a few cheery words for them, and his request that they might put on their caps on doubtless excited some surprise in their minds. He looked long and earnestly at the low rambling house at the end of the alley. It was a beautiful old place. Great elms and beeches, just coming to leaf, sheltered the house behind; to the right lay the English garden and the pleasure grounds, to the left the lawn sloping down to the artificial lake. Sergei, although his was so simple a nature, had the comprehensive eye of the artist, and when he saw a beautiful girlish figure in some bright colored dress coming through the fantastic wrought iron wicket, carrying a long branch of blossom, and the apple trees inside the garden spreading their shoots partly across the opening, something moved him as he had never felt moved before.

He sprang from his horse, and they met and clasped hands, and her lucent eyes looked and smiled up at the clear strong face of the young officer.

"Sergei Alexeitch!"

"Olga Pavlovna!"

"I have been expecting you all the morning. I thought you would have come earlier. There Kolya will take your horse. Won't you come in? You're tired after your long ride."

"Not a bit, Countess, I assure you. Vassia has a shoe when we were only half-way here, and that accounts for the delay; I did not like to ride him hard. Would you mind if I say that out here, in this bright sun, he is infinitely preferable to indoors?"

"I think you're right. Let us go into the garden. I was actually trying to do some painting of the apple trees when I heard the sound of your horse, and came out to meet you."

So he went again through the iron wicket with the apple blossom hanging over it, and Sergei bowed his head low and kissed her. She led him to a garden seat which was made of a tall arbor-vitæ. He will never forget how the perfume of the brave little violets on the bank at his feet seemed to pervade the air.

And then he tried several times to lead the conversation into a channel that would give him the opportunity he desired: but it seemed as though the Countess resolutely sought to thwart him. At last, in despair, he abandoned the diplomatic method of leading up to what he wanted to say.

"Countess," he broke out, "I came to say good-bye. We leave to-morrow, Volodia and I. The regiment is to form in Kisheneff in a week from to-day. Olga Pavlovna,"—Sergei's voice trembled a little—"do not remember against me any of my rudeness. I'm sure you must have thought me ungrateful for so persistently refusing all the kind invitations you sent me during the winter."

"Indeed I do not. You employed your time to far better purpose. Don't let us talk any more of St. Petersburg, I hate it."

"Well, Countess, besides that terrible wrenching 'Good-bye,' I have just one word more, and then I'll go away. I must go at once. Be a good brave woman . . ."

Olga Navrotska's head dropped and turned away, and her eyes grew moist.

"You are good and brave. I know that, Countess. But people want your help so much, and I want you to help them. A word from you, and they are your slaves to make or mar them. Do not, I implore you, fritter away your fresh youth and your great powers in the distractions of society. There is so much to be done. Yes, I feel I am offending you, but I cannot help it. Countess, Countess, do you remember what we are to live for—for the poor, the humble, the neglected, the broken-hearted? God bless you, Olga, God bless you, and think of me sometimes."

He rose and seized the hand that lay on the bench beside him, and kissed it, and then kissed it again and again. He turned and strode along the path out under the apple-blossom and came to Kolya walking his horse. Mounting it, he rode away homewards across the sunny steppe.

Olga cried after him, but he did not hear, She cried, "Oh, Sergei, Sergei, stay and help me!"

(To be continued.)

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THE GREAT TRAVELING CARRIAGE ON ITS WAY TO THE WAR.

CHAPTER VII.

Sergei's Orderly.

SERGEI'S long return ride was none of the pleasantest. He felt somehow that his interview with the Countess had not been successful or well managed, that he had not said what he had wanted to say, that he had said more than he should have said, and, worse than all, he felt that she had not said all that she had on her mind.

And now he had to face the uncertain accidents of a long war before he could see her again. The possibility of winning military renown was never once in his thoughts. He loved his country indeed with a passion that he himself scarcely realized, and he was firmly convinced of the justice of the cause—the crusade, he believed it to be—on which the armies of the Czar were now embarked; but he could not help feeling that soldiering was not his "metier," and that his true vocation was in less exciting spheres, where he might work for his beloved peasantry, and help to lighten the temporal and spiritual burdens under which they groaned. He felt that his life hitherto had been all wrong, and that if he remained in the army it would be only warped and twisted beyond redemption. But war was now declared, a just war besides, and he would be a poltroon to desert the larger interests of the country in favor of his inclinations, however much these might be in accordance with his own individual notions of righteousness. And so through all the long hours back to Slavo his mind was troubled with great doubts. His position perplexed and worried him. He felt, moreover, that he had not a friend in the world to whom he might unburden himself.

And then he suddenly bethought himself of the young preacher, the friend of his boyhood, the man who had grown up through much affliction and the practice of infinite self-denial to be a rock of strength to his fellows. Mikhail Kulmenko was his friend still. He would go straight to him, and together they would seek counsel. Sergei had never forgotten the morning before he left Slavo for the military school, when young Mikhail took him to a grassy hollow in the steppe and asked him to kneel down while he besought the Lord to guard and guide him amid the snares of the new life opening before him. This had been only the first of several such visits to the hollow, and Sergei thought that he would ask Mikhail to accompany him once more, and possibly for the last time, to the well-known spot where he would humble himself before God, and ask his guidance and blessing.

And there, just before him at the entrance to the village, stood Mikhail Kulmenko in his little garden facing the west, with his hand shading his eyes from the level sun flaming low on the horizon, and gazing at the approaching horseman. Sergei dismounted, and picketing his horse at the garden railings, went forward and clasped his friend's hand.

"Mikhail," he said, "I am come to speak with you. I could not go home without seeing you. I'm leaving to-morrow, you know."

Mikhail said never a word, and led the way into the house, and when the old mother knew that the two men would be alone together, she slipped out to see a neighbor. Mikhail's face was pale as death save for the angry red mark on his forehead left by the "uriadnik."

"Sit down, Panitch," he said. "You are tired after your long ride. You have been to Kransnaya Balka. I heard them say you had ridden over there. Is the Countess well? She is a good woman, Panitch."

"Yes, Mikhail, she is well. Mikhail, you're an old friend of mine; you're my only friend, I think. It is about the Countess that I partly wish to speak to you. I'm going away, and may be away for a year, or I may never come back, God only knows. I want you to promise to go over there often and speak to her—to speak to her about what is holiest and best in life. She is a good woman, Mikhail, a noble woman, and she wants to do noble and good deeds. Go over and help her. She knows you and likes you. And then I want you to promise to write me every week a long letter about her, and what she is doing, and if she is well, and what she says. Mikhail, I'm speaking to you as to my brother, and I trust you with my secret. I love the Countess better than I love my life. Will you promise me this, Mikhail?"

Mikhail raised his eyes to his young master's face. "Panitch, dear brother, I cannot do this. I have something to tell you, and you will then decide if I am right. I must leave home, Panitch—I must leave home at once. If I stay here, God forgive me, I shall go mad. I have fought against it for months, and it is conquering me, and I grow more and more helpless. You don't know what is going on. You know Nadyejda Sozontieff. Perhaps, Panitch, you know how for years I have loved her, although I had so little hope of making her my wife. Even in those years when we used to go fishing together, and when she used to come out of her father's "izba" to watch us land the fish, I knew that I loved Nadya, and I believed that she loved me. We were often together, and it was I who taught her to read and write. I gave her my New Testament. Her father disliked me even then, for I was the son of Ivan Kulmenko, who had brought the light to the village, the light that he in his blindness could not see, the light that he still hates so fiercely. But we grew up together, Panitch, she and I, and although in time we saw one another less frequently, I got to love her more and more, and those were the only golden days in my life when I saw Nadya. Once returning from fishing by the river road—it was shortly after father's death—I overtook her and told her I was now nearly a man, and that she would soon be a woman. I opened all my heart to her, Panitch, and she put her arms around my neck and kissed me, and cried, and said she loved me, but said that she could not marry me, as her father hated me so. She wished to promise that she would never marry anyone else, but I would not hear of this. That happened just about a year before you went to Petersburg, a few days before the other Panitch went. And then all of a sudden I ceased to see her—it was as though she avoided me. She sent the New Testament back to me, with a few words written on a piece of paper, thanking me for the loan of it. And I had given it to her to keep. Well, it was a great wrench, but I began to see plainly that she could not love me any longer, so I strove hard, night and day, to forget her. I worked hard, and asked God to strengthen me for my work. I studied night and day—I was eager and hot after knowledge, and in time the thought of Nadya was no longer a sore place in my heart—still tender, Panitch, but not painful.

"But I got to hear after awhile that she was in great distress, and mother, who was on the other side of the river a week ago, saw her at the door and said she looked like a ghost, and that all her beauty had fled. Two days ago I was down by the river, and as I was coming home by a short cut through the sedge, I heard a sound of sobbing that frightened me, for it was a lonely place. I stopped and looked through an opening in the reeds, and there was Nadya crying as though her heart was breaking.

"I went up to her and asked what was the matter, but she only broke into fresh spasms of grief and would not be comforted. Panitch, I left her there, but her misery haunts me. I know she loves me no longer, but all my love for her has come back—indeed I now believe it never left me, and I must go away. I can think of nothing but Nadya. I am unfit for my work. Yes, I know I am weak, but I can't help it. I'll go away for awhile and struggle to be a man again."

"But where will you go, Misha? You can't go away and leave the brethren without any one. My poor brother, I am very sorry for you? How can I help you?"

"Take me with you to the war, Panitch. Keep me beside you, and we'll come back together after it is all over. And then you will go over to Kransnaya Balka, and you know what her answer will be. And I will return healed of my wound, and we'll be all happy together."

"But, Misha—you go to war! you, a Stundist preacher?"

"Yes, Panitch, why not? I think it is the very place for a preacher. I would not go to fight, but I thought you could take me as your servant. I'd serve you loyally, Panitch, and do everything for you, let me go with you. I'll do my best among the soldiers and try to win some of them to the light. I'll go to the hospitals and strive to lessen grief and pain there. Yes, Panitch, I'll go; you consent? Who'll take my place? Why, Vassily Pavlitch, of course. I told him that I thought of going away for some months, and he promises to relieve me."

So it was decided that when Sergei left on the following day, Mikhail Kulmenko, the Stundist preacher, should accompany him as his soldier servant. Sergei knew that he could arrange this with his Colonel and with the village elder at Slavo; and he felt happy that he would have a faithful friend at his side, and some one with whom he could draw aside at times and talk of higher and holier things than the world knows of.

Mikhail was satisfied to seek in the excitement of the front and in the fresh field of distracting work that would be opened up to him there, some consolation of his human grief about Nadyejda.

And they both looked forward to the happier days when the fight would be over. Both had a dim feeling that they did not

(Continued on page 565.)

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G. L., Buffalo.—Am troubled with pains my kidneys; cannot stand long without grea

Take Ovarine, in four-drop dose daily, for two months. Use hot bat cally, once or twice a week.

P. R. S., Phila.—Gastrine will cur taken according to directions faithfully

W. N. B., Brooklyn.—What can I take for

Take Thyroidine, extract of thyroi in three-drop does, three times daily tongue. Twice a week take two t fuls of Nathlorithic Salts in a tumbler a half-hour before breakfast.

Dr. J. S. B., Lancaster, Pa.—Give and Nathrolithic Salts. No.

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eir troubles in a proper perspective, nd hat when they got away from them e would sink to insignificance. But e ll would come rushing in on them the p thought of the home-coming, and as e y at there hour after hour in the hum- e ttage, they began talking about the in est plans for the future, about seeds r e peasants' gardens, and schoolrooms e children, and a simple lathe for the e the boys. And Mikhail again told g that all would be well, and Sergei ic Mikhail look wistful and try to look p when he assured him that there was c l time coming for him and Nadya.

A r their long communion the two men s ted, and until far into the night they d their preparations for departure. h morning came it was at once known t ikhail was going to the front with n n Sergei, and his "izba" was soon f ith little groups of his friends, not t sts alone, but orthodox peasants as h en who had learned to love the gen- l patient man who never quarrelled, e ver said a bitter word or a hard a bout any one, whose wise advice s often sought in perplexity, whose ce was as much theirs as his. His t her and the other women shed tears, e men stood around and wondered l singular resolution. They would m es take his hand in both theirs and r wring it. Vassily Pavlitch was t tell every one that he was going to c her during Mikhail's absence, and p ained smile on his face he tried to h em believe what he did not wish to e himself, that in the future, and when t t used to him, they would not find t a difference after all between his s and Mikhail's. The old widow n ko handed around glasses of weak a little bits of sugar, and some "piroj- had baked for Mikhail to take away m to the war, were also handed n nd silently eaten. And so the hours n ng day passed.

ngth late in the afternoon, and he "izba" was full of people, Ser- down word that he and his brother a dy, and that Mikhail was to join r riage at the ferry. The last few a at home had come, and the Stundist p in the midst of his people and is eyes and clasped his hands to- All around him followed his exam- there was a long silence, so pain- intense a silence that the people they heard their hearts beat. Then r another sighed, and Mikhail took p undle and Vassily Pavlitch anoth- without a word they streamed out of age, Mikhail and his old mother in front, the others in a long l owing—all silent and sorrowful.

went slowly up the village to the From the brow of the hill they saw n why hardly a soul had come out izbas" to see them pass. The illage in a great crowd was down rry. The women in their scarlet ite, the men home from the fields an usual, the moist clay still cling- them. The Stundists slowly de- along the dusty road and past the 's cottage to where the others sembled. Old Sozontieff had his dy and every one was waiting for ge to appear.

it comes, here it comes," shouted en; and the great lumbering trav- riage with four horses came slow- , and behind it walked the old ery feeble, his nephews walking side. The villagers went up to m; the carriage stopped and the nd the young officers bowed in to the low obeisance of the peas- hen the great crowd let the carri- and slowly returned to the ferry. a word the young men, first n, and then his brother, fell on the s neck and kissed him on both nd he threw his frail arms over s lders, and the villagers noted how white his hands were, and how he wore seemed too big for his

-bye," shouted Sergei from the God bless you all! God bless e!"

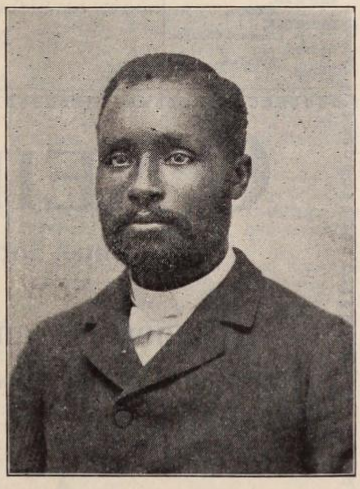
ir said nothing, looking straight m across the stream. Mikhail's as rocking herself in her son's he tore himself away and sprang erry as Sozontieff was unloosen- ooring chains.

they floated across the great villagers remaining on the bank. Arrived on the other side the two dragoons entered their carriage, Mikhail sprang up beside the coachman and away they galloped towards the fading West. The crowd on the bank still watched them until there was only a thin trail of dust on the horizon, and then the women put their aprons up to their eyes. The general, his face pale and drawn, turned and left them without a word, and feebly walked up the hill to his empty home.

(To be continued.)

EDUCATING SOUTHERN NEGROES.

DURING the last ten years, a great educational movement has been in progress among the colored people in many parts of the South. Colleges, Institutes, and Normal Schools have sprung up in different States, and many of them, from small beginnings, have attained the proportions and importance of educational institutions



PROF. J. J. HIGGS.

of a very high order. In nearly every instance, they have followed the example of the Hampton Institute and the Edward Waters' College, in making religious instruction and the study of the Scriptures a prominent part of the training, and the result is shown in the large numbers of educated Christian young men and women who are graduated from such institutions every year.

One of the latest projects of this character looks to the establishment of Central Normal and Industrial Schools at Waycross, Ga. Prof. J. J. Higgs, a Christian preacher who has been engaged in educational work for many years, has been the prime mover in the matter, and through his efforts mainly, the proposed schools were organized last summer. A building was secured and work begun, but it was quickly found that the facilities were altogether inadequate. An effort is now being made to interest the friends of colored education, North and South, in the project, and the people of Waycross have already set the example by starting a substantial subscription list in behalf of the schools. It is proposed to erect a frame school-house, to accommodate 400 scholars, and also a lecture hall, teachers' residence, and workshops for the mechanical and industrial departments. Plans for these buildings have been prepared, and the estimated cost will be in the neighborhood of $10,000. Two acres of land in the suburbs of Waycross have been purchased for the projected buildings, and the committee is now in treaty for a small farm in the immediate neighborhood. The committee consists of Rev. B. J. Greene, President; N. M'Millan, Vice-President; Dr. G. P. Washington, Secretary, and R. T. Anderson, Treasurer. Rev. A. A. J. Edgerton, of the Baptist Church, Weldon, N. C., is associated with Prof. Higgs, and will become a member of the faculty at Waycross. Any who are interested in this effort for the purpose of educating and elevating the colored race in the South, can obtain full information concerning the project by writing to Dr. Washington, Waycross, Ga.

A CONVERTED SHEPHERD.

Among the converts at Sheo-Hang, in North China is a remarkable man who holds the office of village shepherd. Mr. Pigott, who is laboring there, says the man, Li-pai by name, was formerly a wine-drinker and quarrelsome, but of a sturdy, independent character. "On my first visit in 1892, he stood among a large crowd to listen. At the close of the service he bought a copy of the Gospel of Luke. Two years passed as he fed his large flock of sheep, and found him often pondering over the wonderful Book, until those who knew him saw the wine and quarrelling given up, and his dislike to idols increasing. Meantime, we had settled here, but he was shy of coming, and his large flock kept him occupied, till one bright morning Mrs. Piggott and I started to visit the aunt of one of those who desired to own the Lord in baptism, a Mrs. Kong, lately restored to sight under my wife's treatment. A little lamb in Li-pai's flock had died, and he had to tramp five miles to report its death to its owner, Mrs. Kong. He came in just as we did, and recognizing me as the man of whom he bought the book, he soon told of his treasured Gospel and the wonderful Jesus of whom it told, adding that he had ceased to worship idols. Since then he has grown bold and earnest, bringing in his comrades to the services, preaching in the houses of his employers, and bearing many a hard word for his Lord."

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...NADJA;...

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"SHE IMPLORED HIM NOT TO FORSAKE HER."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Ferryman's Home.

KUZMA SOZONTIEFF'S cottage was hard by the river on the village side, just below a long rippled sand-dune over which somehow the wind was always sweeping. On the coarse grass that grew all around, his few sheep and cattle gained a scanty subsistence, herded by Grisha, the half-witted servant lad. The outside of the little "izba" bore no marks of taste or even of care. The blowing sand from the dune lay in little wavelets thick on the roof, the door hung badly on its hinges, the walls were not white-washed, there was no railed-in space like that in front of the Stundists' cottages, where flowers might grow. It was a cheerless, forlorn-looking place.

Nor was the interior a bit more homelike. Sozontieff gave no heed to such matters. The floor was of earth beaten hard, and the ceiling formed of thin branches of bushes with the dry leaves still clinging to them. There was a long settle, half bed and half coffer, along one side of the outer room. A heavy table stood in the centre, with a straw bed under it for Grisha, and a high-backed arm-chair, coarsely carved, the work of Sozontieff's youth, was pushed into a corner close to the huge stove. On the walls hung some old clothes, and the window-ledge was occupied with a loaf of rye bread wrapped up in a fringed napkin, a large earthenware jug of water, and a few simple cooking utensils.

A doorway, but without any door, led to the little chamber occupied by Nadyejda. Here everything was scrupulously clean and white. The girl had worked a great white counterpane for her low bed, and had hung on the walls long white strips of linen with ends embroidered in black, red and blue designs of flowers and figures. There was a clean matting of straw on the floor which she and Grisha had made; and scattered about were the inevitable little nick-nacks which every woman, no matter how humble her circumstances, manages to gather into her room. They were mostly her mother's.

But Sozontieff's cottage possessed one treasure that the owner of it would not have exchanged for wealth untold. It hung high in the left hand corner of the room as you entered—a large glittering square frame of burnished silver enclosing a picture of St. Nicholas, The Wonder Worker, painted on wood. Only the face and hands of the saint were visible, and they were brown and discolored with age and the pressure of the lips of four generations of Sozontieffs. The rest of it was covered with a thin plaque of polished silver. This was the ferryman's icon, his god, the object that he worshipped with his whole soul. Before the picture, and suspended by a silver chain from the ceiling, hung a lampada of silver and glass full of sacred oil, in which floated a tiny burning wick that lighted up a thousand glittering reflections on the broad front of wrought silver behind it.

On the ground below the icon was a wooden stand about as high as a man's waist, on the top of which were little receptacles where Sozontieff on great occasions placed lighted candles before the Wonder-Worker.

Sozontieff was not an Orthodox Russian. If the Stundists held the ritual of the Orthodox Church in contempt, if they utterly denied the use and value of its ceremonies, they never lost their feeling of love and veneration for all that is best and noblest in the wonderful church of their land, the church that has been such an anchor of hope and comfort to the Russian people in the most terrible episodes and the most crushing disasters of their history. But Sozontieff hated the church and all her ways with the consuming and unthinking passion of the fanatic. He was a member of the sect of Old Believers, a descendant of the men who held to the ancient ritual and the ancient books and rubrics of the church as they were before the days of the Patriarch Nikon, the great reformer of the Greek Orthodox Church. It was he, he claimed, who was orthodox; it was the so-called orthodox who were dissenters and the slaves of blasphemous innovators.

Sozontieff all his life had brooded over these things. His father had been a priest of the Old Believers somewhere among the Cossacks of the Ural, and he remembered how the old man had been forced one night to fly before the Orthodox Cossacks when they attacked him in his "izba" and set fire to the thatch. His youth had been spent in wandering over the steppe in company with his father. He had come to Kief when the old man was dying to seek some help and a final resting-place for him. Here he fell in love with some members of his own sect; and, taught to read and write by his father, and brought up in the strictest ideas of the Old Believers, he was appointed their priest, and married to a girl selected for him by the little community. But he was unable to settle down. The unrest and desire to wander so characteristic of the Russian in his natural phases took firm possession of the young priest, and with his wife and infant daughter he began to roam, he knew not and cared not whither. They came on to Slavo, and the village elder, treating them as vagrants, hauled them up before the general for punishment. The general, far from punishing Sozontieff, was so struck with the noble exterior of the man and with his independent bearing, that he begged him to remain in Slavo, offering him the cottage down by the river and the position of ferryman. It was a home and an occupation that seemed exactly to suit the Old Believer, and he readily accepted the general's offer.

That was nearly twenty years before our story opens. Ten years of comparative contentment and happiness, and then his wife, whom he dearly loved, died and left Sozontieff alone with little Nadja.

There comes a shock in the lives of all of us, and after it there is always a difference. The loss of his wife was the blow from which the ferryman never recovered. He became a recluse and a misanthrope. The duties of the ferry became irksome and were usually performed by the hired man, Sozontieff himself sitting alone in his room reading prayers before the icon, or everlastingly polishing its silver covering. And as month followed month the lonely man, always brooding and silent, began to see visions and hear voices, and would sit for hours communing with the supernatural beings whom he fancied he had called up around him. In his wilder moments he constituted himself the priest on earth of untold numbers of the souls of departed Old Believers, and poor Nadja, shivering in her cot, would listen terror-stricken to his ravings.

It was before the shining St. Nicholas that most of his conferences with supernatural powers took place. He would address the icon in his natural tones, and after a pause would answer himself in the solemn deep bass that the priest employs when he says the liturgy. For hours at a time he would gravely go through these services with only Nadja listening in her little room, and the half-witted Grisha crouching under the table. These two dreaded the sight of the terrible shining thing that spoke such strange messages from an unseen world, and Grisha, when he was alone in the house, would hang a cloth in front of it to hide it from his eyes until the returning steps of his master warned him to uncover it again. It was a terrible home for young Nadja to grow up in, her only companions the silly shepherd youth and the dark-browed taciturn fanatic with his mysticism, his superstition, his incipient madness.

Her father's occasional absences from home were always a welcome relief to Nadja. At such times she could leave the house for awhile and wander along the river bank to talk to other girls, or watch the village lads at their fishing. Even in those early days of her life every one recognized her beauty, and the tall fair-haired girl—"White Nadja" they called her—occupied much of the thoughts of the village youths. She was most attracted by young Mikhail Kulmenko, and we know already how the Stundist lad tried to guide her and fill her life with interests and thoughts which she must have welcomed

(Continued on page 581.)

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Give him Febricide Pills, one three ti daily, for a week; then give him Thyroid extract of the thyroid gland, in three-d doses, three times daily. Regulate the bo with Nathrolithic Salts.

J. B.—The fingers of my left hand seem to hav strength. I cannot close my hand, and suffer a g deal of pain.

Take Medulline, extract of the spinal c in five-drop doses, three times daily, on tongue.

Buffalo.—My face has a very oily appeara Kindly give me some remedy.

Take two teaspoonfuls of Nathrolithic S in a tumbler of hot water, a half hour be breakfast, once or twice a week. Avoid when washing the face and take a cold spo bath all over every morning.

M. A. X.—Have been annoyed for over a year large pimples on my back. Can you suggest a c

Take Thyroidine, extract of the thyd gland, in three-drop doses, three times d on the tongue. Twice each week take a of Nathrolithic Salts. Report in a month.

Laura S., Memphis.—No; Yes; Take trine, a teaspoonful after each meal. You get better at once. Your nervousness co from a disordered stomach.

W. T. PARKER, M. D.
Med. Dept., Col. Chem. Co.

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s relations of a better world, of a more eau ful and loving world, than any she ad itherto known. And then came her cq intance with Vladimir Alekhin. To ee in sit in her father's cottage as the old nan oured out his tales of the persecu- on f the Old Believers and his denunci- tion of innovators was perhaps a pleasure o he but it was a pleasure not unmingled with read and misgiving, and her wo- nan instinct warned her that Vladimir as pt there for any good purpose.

B these feelings soon vanished, and he me under the influence of the young ade bold dark eyes and silver tongue. he ok to comparing his fine clothes, his ultu d accent, his perfect manners with he re homespun and simple language of he S ndist peasant, and although at first is ta, when he met her apart from her the seemed bold and wrong, she got sed it, ending by believing in and stor- ng i her memory every word he spoke. ust Vladimir obtained ascendancy over er, the waning influence of Kulmenko eak ed and died. She put faith in Vlad- nir' false promises, and in her girlish eart he built gorgeous castles in which he a Vladimir were the lord and lady of lav and the whole countryside was do- g tm honor.

Fo the first year or two of Vladimir's se he sent her an occasional message rou the hands of Haim Rosenberg, but e le notes gradually ceased. During s in equent visits to the village she saw m e h time for a few fleeting hours, but s so as he joined his regiment his visits th village became rarer still and the eeti hours became fleeting minutes.

Ho, so hard to kill, was at last gradu- ly d ng down in her heart, and only the st s rk of it remained when news reach- he that Vladimir had arrived in Slavo hi way to the war. She plucked up ura to write him a few simple words, kin him to meet her if only for a mo- ent the old trysting-place. At the ap- int hour she waited for him, and he me d frowned on her. She implored m it to forsake her, to take her away m er whither—to the ends of the earth he ed. She told him she believed she s ng, and her pale cheeks and sunken es ded their testimony to her words. r li would be miserable without him. e wild follow him in the humblest ser- e. ladimir was not moved—he looked ay rom her upturned, pleading face, d rghly tore her hands from his neck. col cutting tones he told her that she is longer anything to him, that he Cd ny other interests than to please her, nd oer ambitions than to be the husband a p sant's daughter. He advised her to to ief and live there, and forget all out m. Producing his pocket-book, he ere o defray the expenses of her jour- y. adya, however, had not sunk so w. er eyes blazed, she flung back his nd, nd the roubles went fluttering about s e. Then in simple and gentle tones, t he nger was only for a moment, she sou t him to leave her.

The cultured and polished officer bent wn gather up his money, and without wor of comfort or farewell, left her. She tch him until he was out of sight, and n ew herself on the grass in an ago- of ief and despair, and sobbed with- t ceing. She knew not how long she s mai i there, but she was dimly con- ous hat the kind voice of the young each said something soothing to her, at stroked her hair and tried to raise r : h she would not be comforted.

It v s dark, and the air was cold and mp hen she returned home. Her fath- was neeling in front of the shining icon, d lited tapers were placed in a row fore . Grisha was lying on his straw der e table with his back to the icon, hich as so terrible a thing in his eyes. oor adja slipped into her room, her ther ever lifting his head; but Grisha noticed her, and brought her a glass of tea and some rye bread, and after mutely looking into her troubled eyes for a moment, he touched her fair hair with his stained hands, and went again to lie down on his straw.

For more than an hour after Nadya's return the Old Believer kept up an incessant prayer to the icon. Sometimes his voice rose almost to a scream, sometimes it sank to a whisper.

"Nadya," he called.

"Yes, father."

"Where have you been?"

"Along the river bank."

"Come here, child, and kneel down. Come here, I say."

Nadya rose and knelt beside her father, but he never once looked at her. A long silence followed. Sozontieff at last rose.

"Girl," he said, "I know everything. You know who told me." He pointed to the icon. "Remain on your knees here till midnight. The Wonder-Worker will not speak to-night, but he has something to say to both of us. At midnight you will go to your room, and you will not leave it until Panitch Vladimir departs.

(To be continued.)

A LIFE SPENT FOR CHRIST.

The following poetical tribute was addressed to Mr. J. C. Lanphier founder of the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, on Sept. 3, the 86th anniversary of his birth:

ALL hail to thee! thou vet'ran saint,
Whose years roll on without restraint,
And mind serene and clear,
With heart aglow in Christian love,
And faith long fixed on things above.
Still standing firm, sincere.

Thy visage noble and sublime,
Still beautiful, unmarked by time
God makes it thus endure.
Though snowy locks adorn thy brow,
No care is written on it now;
For all thy life was pure.

Yea! God gives health and years to thee
That sceptic minds may learn and see—
What godlinesss will do:
In filling "ripe old age" with joy,
Nor letting ills of life annoy
Those who to him are true.

Life's path in noble work for God,
Far down a century thou hast trod,
And faithful pilgrim been:
Proclaiming blest Salvation's sound,
Diffusing heavenly light around,
Which thousands glad have seen.

"Old Fulton Street's" dear place of prayer,
Was formed by thee, God led thee there;
And yet that altar stands,
Blessings to thousands it has brought,
And through it, God has wonders wrought
O'er this and other lands.

Though six and eighty years have gone,
God's gracious hand has filled each one
With blessings unto thee.
He cheers thee now, in "Beulah's land,"
With sweet prospective visions, grand
Of faith's eternity.

At last—when mortal life has run
Joyous! thou'lt hear the glad "well done,"
And in blest triumph go.
To dwell with him thou'st served so long,
'Mid heaven's rapturous bliss and song,
Immortal life to know.

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BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

CHAPTER IX.

Grisha Tchaika.

THE FOUNDLING SHEPHERD.

IN nearly every Russian village of any size there is generally to be found some one of feeble mind, on whom the peasants look with compassion and pity mingled with respect, as one sent by God to remind them of the vanity of things, of the weaknesses of the human mind, of the thin dividing line between mind and matter. A Russian peasant would not perhaps express himself in these words, but when he sees the village fool these are the notions that fill his mind, and he is kind to the fool in consequence, and thinks very humbly of himself.

In Slavo, Grisha Tchaika was the simpleton of the village. But although every one knew him he was seen but seldom. Unlike most of his afflicted fraternity, he kept himself remote from the haunts of men, never courting observation, avoiding conversation. This was in part owing to the ferryman's management. Sozontieff knew how inquisitive the villagers were, and with simple Grisha to cross-examine they could soon discover, if they wished, every detail of his and his daughter's life. He might have sent his few cattle and sheep to the communal pasture-land, but he preferred not to do so, lest Grisha might get talking. He kept his little flock to the bitter herbage of the sand-dunes by the river where Grisha could herd them unmolested and unquestioned.

It was just eighteen years before our story opens that Sozontieff's wife, who had not then been very long in Slavo, was out on the dunes towards evening. Her work for the day was over, and with her baby girl in her arms she was out looking for some wild flowers, that she knew grew on the river bank below the sand. She had already gone some little distance from her cottage, and was running down towards the river when she was startled by a cry from the water's edge as from an infant.

She approached the spot, and looking into a thicket of sedge growing close to the river she saw a child of a few months, almost naked, laid beside the stream, the water almost touching it. It was April, the river was rising daily, indeed hourly, and knowing this, the woman's first impulse was to snatch the child from its precarious position and place it higher on the bank. The terrible thought rushed in on her that it was placed so near the water on purpose, but as this was too cruel a suspicion she banished it from her mind, and stilled the crying of the child until its careless mother might come to fetch it. Her mind was busy as she waited there. Whose child was it? The little shirt it wore was of far finer texture than anything in a peasant baby's wardrobe; besides, the poor thing was hunchbacked terribly so, and if any of the villagers had had a hunchbacked child she would surely have heard of it. It was all inexplicable. She waited until it was almost dark, and then as no one came she fed it together with her own baby and took it home, wrapping the two children in her warm shawl.

The ferryman loved his wife, and anything she did he was willing to approve of, but in his own heart he wished she had let the child perish, and he was perfectly certain that it had been placed on the water's edge to perish, and by some one who knew the river. Visiting the spot next morning he found a strong current sweeping over the spot and the water a foot deep. He accepted, however, the care of the child, that is to say, he did not interfere with his wife's care of it. All that he did was to baptize it an Old Believer, calling it Grigori or Grisha, as it had been found on the day when he made a vow to St. Grigori, and Tchaika, from a word in use among the Cossacks of the Ural, signifying a river.

Grisha grew and developed so slowly that he remained a puny weakling beside the strong well-grown daughter of the ferryman. It was also soon apparent that the weak body of the foundling contained a still feebler mind, shattered and diseased. His foster-mother sought by persevering kindness to awaken some sparks of intellect, some ideas of order, in the mind of the boy, but it was all terribly up-hill work, and poorly rewarded. Nadja, as she grew up, treated him gently and considerately, for Grisha was sensitive to ridicule, and when laughed at would mope in a corner for hours by himself.

Once when the children were about five years old they were playing together on the river bank. The General, who had been out alone shooting, passed them on his way home. He had been absent nearly five years from Slavo, and this was his first visit after his return to this part of his property. The contrast presented by the two children, one so beautiful and strong and active, the other deformed, dull, slow, must have struck him, for he stopped to speak to them; but after a nearer examination of Grisha's features he altered his intention, passing hurriedly away. Nadja, when she told her father about it, said that the General grew pale and stared at Grisha as though he were frightened.

Sozontieff, however, thought little of the incident until after the lapse of a few days when the General visited him, and asked to see him alone. His first inquiry was about Grisha—who he was and where he came from. Sozontieff narrated all the circumstances connected with the finding of him, and the eagerness and deep attention of his listener struck him as more than remarkable. Then a sudden thought flashed through his mind. Is there not something under all this inquisitiveness that is not disinterested? Why should the General desire information about this misshapen idiot boy? Why had his somewhat frequent visits to Slavo ceased just about the time that Grisha was found? Indeed Sozontieff suddenly remembered that he had left that very day, for it was after ferrying him across the river on his way to Kief that he returned to his cottage to find his wife with the foundling. He said nothing of all this to the General, nor when he was gone did he speak to his own wife on the subject; he pondered it much, however, in his own mind. And when the General once or twice afterwards sent him some gifts of his nephew's cast-off clothes the ferryman was more than ever puzzled.

Year followed year until the children were nine years old, and then the great shock of his life, the death of his wife, the blow that changed him, prostrated Sozontieff for months. Nadja and Grisha no longer formed part of his life and interest.

But the loss of her parents' care, although keenly felt by Nadja, never made the difference to her that the loss of his foster-mother made to Grisha. The poor fellow now shunned the house except as a shelter in bad weather. He sought the open air always, and after a while seemed to take delight in it. In winter on fine days he would race over the frozen river and along the snow-covered dunes, taking an infantile delight in rolling the snow into fantastic shapes that he thought resembled men and birds and beasts and houses. He would tell Nadja, who was often his sympathizing companion, that some misshapen mound of snow he had raised represented a certain beast he had seen in one of her father's books. But his chief delight was to think he had fashioned an image of the dragon in the ferryman's picture of St. George the Victor.

Sozontieff had now grown indifferent to the poor fellow's happiness, even to his comfort. As soon as he saw he was gaining strength he set him to herd the cows and sheep, and to labor about the house at odd jobs of work which his feeble capacity could grasp the meaning of.

But it was in the late spring and summer that Grisha showed most signs of understanding and enjoying life. His actions and words at those seasons had meaning and coherence—warped and twisted perhaps, but with a definiteness and sometimes with a beauty that was peculiarly suggestive, and with a pathetic character all their own. It was young Kulmenko who, once when they were out together, drew Sergei's attention to the beautiful summer picture of Grisha leaning on his shepherd's staff, with the sheep resting around him in the noontide heat and stillness—Grisha looking far away over the river across the illimitable steepe.

The summer river had peculiar charms for the poor hunchback. He often told Nadja that he heard a song in the river that pleased him and made him laugh. He used to tell her that each side of the river had its own song, and through shallow waters he would often wade deep in butterburrs over to a little eyot of sand where he could hear the two songs sung in harmony. He felt the charm of voice and expression of musical sounds in an extraordinary degree. He could not give his feelings and states of mind their proper names, he could seldom find words to explain them any more than he could many another sensation of his derived from his communings with nature. Perhaps they had no names, they were so shifting, fugitive, baffling.

It was only Nadja who fully understood the poor fellow's broken ideas, and who sought to teach him to express them, though ever so imperfectly. He rewarded her gentle consideration with a devotion that was almost painful in its intensity. If she admired a flower, he would travel for miles to obtain bunches of them big enough to deck her room with. Once the beautiful plumage of a bird that flew past them drew forth an expression of her admiration. She did not know until he brought her the dead body of its fellow long afterwards that it had been his constant labor for days to devise some way of snaring it alive, and that failing in this he had killed one with a stone. They had their own language these two, a dialect that no one else fully understood. The girl had quickly learnt his disjointed syllables, the harsh grating cries that did him service for speech.

Besides Nadja, Grisha had no friend but Mikhail Kulmenko. From the first the Stundist felt that it was his duty to strive to lighten the poor hunchback's darkness; and attracted by the strong personality of his friend, Grisha used to follow him on his fishing and other expeditions, and sit or walk beside him, eagerly watching and listening. It was with the utmost difficulty that Mikhail could gather the broken remnants of Grisha's speech into an expression of an idea, but in time he learned to do so, though not nearly so completely as Nadja. Mikhail, however, seemed to be able to impart an idea to Grisha better than Nadja could.

It more than once happened that Grisha was with him as he sat reading his New Testament down by the river, and curious to see the effect of its message on one so imperfect and immature, he told him about God and about his love for the world; about Christ, his work and his death.

(Continued on page 597.)

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Much of this was utterly incomprehensible to poor Grisha, but he understood love, an stranger still, he understood sacrifice. When Mikhail strove to discover if he had an notion of God, he said that God must be like Nadja who cared for him and loved him just because she wished to, and not because she must, or because he deserved to be loved. He thought that Christ must be like him in some ways, for he was ready to ease living if Nadja only wished it. If she told him to go into the river he would go there and drown. If she told him to put his hand in the oven he would do it.

It came into Mikhail's head once or twice to take Grisha to a Stundist meeting that was sometimes held in summer out on the steppe, and so attracted and affected was he by the music and the solemn crowd of worshippers that he always begged Mikhail when he met him to take him to another. The hunchback would wait evening after evening in the hollow of the steppe, if by chance he should happen on another meeting, and it had become quite a common thing to see Grisha at the steppe meetings. Of course Sozontieff never knew of this or it would have gone hard with the boy. What chiefly attracted Grisha at these meetings was the singing. For the sake of the singing he used to go up to the village and skulk outside Mikhail's cottage when meetings were being held there. As these meetings were usually held at night, Grisha had not much fear of being detected. He could never quite reconcile what he heard in Mikhail's cottage or at the steppe meetings with the religious exercises which he saw the peasant go through.

Grisha felt that in both cases there was worship, but the one was so attractive, so homely, so full of love and gentleness, so full of sweet sounds that lingered with him, and the other so stern and forbidding, so weird and fantastic and remote even to his mind that he once told Nadja if Mikhail was God and Christ as his masters, the peasant has the devil and St. Nicholas.

The icon of the Wonder-Worker was an object of dread to the poor natural. The horror of it was part of the texture of his life, and even in those moments when he was most a sentient-thinking being, most in communion with what he knew of nature, the icon with its dim brown face and half-closed drooping eyes, its aspect of impending decaying, before which candles should be lighted and incense burnt, made him think of death. He had seen a dead countenance in his childhood, and the sight of it had refined a terror to him for years. He would have done anything to get rid of the one thing that his master had such communion with; but as this was impossible, he bore its presence with mute suffering, sometimes crooning a snatch of Stundist hymn before it, so that if it were the Evil One, or had any connection with him, the hymn might serve as some sort of protection from the wicked influences which Grisha believed it was always exercising. For Grisha's religion was a formless and intangible thing.

It was Nadja's bright presence in the peasant's house that kept Grisha somewhat within the outside limits of sanity and reason. But for her his hard life, Sozontieff's cruel neglect, and above all the constant abiding terror of the icon would long ago deprived his warped mind of its flickers of reason and humanity. She adjusted to feel this dimly at times. She felt that his gentleness and tractability were due to her watchful and continuous care for him. She dreaded the thought of what might have been without her, of what might become without her.

(To be continued.)

BOOKS RECEIVED.

Hundred Years of Missions; or the Story of Protestant Missions from Carey's Beginning, by Rev. Delavan L. Pierson, with an introduction by Rev. A. T. Pierson, D.D. Pp. 430. Published by Funk & Wagnalls, New York.

The Innkeeper's Ledger: a series of temperance discourses, by Louis Albert Banks, D.D. Pp. 75 cents. Published by Funk & Wagnalls, New York, London and Toronto.

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HEAVEN.

"So shall we ever be with the Lord."

IN rapturous thought, I have seen the bright home,
Which Jesus has gone himself to prepare;
When all things are ready he surely will come
And gather his loved ones, to dwell with him there.
Oh, what joy to be with him there!

'Twere pleasure untold, our loves ones to meet,
Where sorrowful partings are never more known;
United, to hold communion most sweet;
United to worship the King on his throne,
Oh, what joy to be with him there!

In that home of the heart are no blighted hopes,
There life's deepest mysteries will all be made clear;
No tear-bedimmed eyes, no pain, and no death;
When shall I awaken and find myself there?
Oh, the joy of a home over there!

There Jesus unveils his adorable face
With the light of his countenance, all shall be blest.
The weary and worn, the sorrowing and sad,
Find rest and refreshment on his loving breast.
Oh, what joy to be with him there!

Boston, Mass. MARY GORDON BURPEE.

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The town of Babylon, L. I., is enjoying a spiritual revival and the circumstances that led to it are peculiar. Mr. E. Post, a Christian dentist of New York, who had occasion to visit Babylon, L. I., met Mr. Johnson of Babylon, and the course of the conversation disclosed that the town was spiritually dead. Mr. Post at once conceived the idea of starting a camp-meeting at Babylon, and to this end purchased a large and commodious tent, invaded the town single-handed, and telegraphed to the Bowery Mission to send some of its convert workers. This request was promptly complied with, and on the 22d of August the work was begun.

The first evening, the people gathered on the outskirts of the tent, few—not more than a dozen—daring to enter. On the second night, more gained courage and the tent was partially filled, but without any conversions taking place. On the third night, the power of the Lord began to be manifested and the remarkable testimonies given by the Bowery Mission converts, telling the sad story of their lives and their marvelous deliverance through the acceptance of the risen Saviour, broke down the stony barrier and fifteen persons gave their hearts to the Lord.

On the fourth night this number was increased by adding twenty-five, among whom was an aged lady who had been a church member all her life, but realized at this late day that the requirement for salvation was no less than that the Spirit of the Lord should come in and abide in her life. And now the work goes bravely on and the tent is thronged nightly. The services which were at first conducted only in the evenings, are now extended to day services as well. As the Bowery workers leave, only to be replaced by others, many a prayerful exclamation of "God bless the Bowery Mission" greets their ears.

Mr. Post and wife are earnest, consecrated Christians who take a deep interest in all Christian work and when at home give much of their time and encouragement to the Bowery Mission.

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...NADJA;...

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CHAPTER X.

Before the Icon.

SOZONTIEFF'S ADJURATION.

FOR two days Nadja remained a close prisoner in her own room. Save that her father kept a strict watch on her movements she was not molested in any way. She had no desire to leave the house, and told her father so, but it seemed as though he could not trust her. He sat reading in his carved chair outside the cottage all day long, only leaving it to perform his prolonged devotions before the icon. Grisha attended on his young mistress, leaving his cows and sheep to wander over the dunes at their own sweet will. He made tea for her, and ran into the cottage every now then to report that a certain peasant had gone along the river path, and that another had crossed the river, that a woman had gone to cut rushes, and so on. His artless, half-foolish gibberish which only she could perfectly understand, helped to interest the girl, and the simple kindness of his every word and action did something to compensate her for her loss of liberty, if it failed to banish the thoughts of the terrible interview with her father which she knew was coming, and which weighed so heavily on her spirits.

At last the afternoon of the departure came, and Nadja could hear the voices of the peasants on the road as they awaited the coming of the traveling carriage. Her father was at the ferry with the hired man, and she and Grisha were alone, he running in and out in a state of the utmost excitement.

"Tell me, Grisha," asked Nadja at last, what are those voices? I hear the people in front of the house."

"Oh, it is grand, Nadja! I was waiting for you to ask. The sun is shining low down, and Panitch Sergei and Panitch Volodia are going away to fight, and they say they are going in the carriage, and the carriage will be coming down the hill presently; and Mikhail the Stundist is going also, and all the people are waiting to see them."

"But Mikhail the Stundist! Is he going also!" Nadja's heart sank.

"Yes, they say he's sick, and that if he does not go away he'll die. Panitch Sergei is taking him."

Nadja bowed her face in her apron and wept, and Grisha stood by silent and wondering. She raised her tear-stained face, and told him to go away and tell her no more, and he went lingeringly and looking longingly from the doorway. Nadja heard the clamor of the peasants outside, caught a word here and there, but nothing connectedly.

A time of silence followed as they went up the hill to meet the carriage, then the crackle and crunch of the wheels on the road and the subdued voices of the returning villagers. Now and again she could hear her father giving orders about the ferry, and at last Sergei's cheery voice as he cried out "God bless you all!" But the voice that she was straining every nerve to hear was silent. She threw herself on her bed and wept again.

It was not long before her father returned. She heard him drag his heavy chair inside and set it in its usual place before the stove. She heard him pace silently backwards and forwards in the little outer room until it was quite dark, until Grisha had come in and lain down on the straw under the table. Sometimes he tramped slowly and methodically, sometimes in haste, smiting his hands together and sighing. Apparently worn out, he sank down at last in his chair in the dark and slept.

Towards midnight he wakened and rousing Grisha ordered him to light the lamp, he himself lighting the little blue lampada hanging by its silver chain before the icon. He then drew the chair into the centre of the room facing the shining picture of St. Nicholas the Wonder-Worker.

"Nadja," he said in grating tones, "are you asleep?"

"No, father."

"Then dress yourself quickly and come here; I have much to say to you."

In a few minutes Nadja appeared, pale, worn, hollow-eyed.

"Sit down, child in the chair. Grisha, bring the lamp here and set it on the stove. Look up, girl. Why have you been weeping?"

"Oh father, I am so miserable! I am so lonely. I am frightened. I am not like other girls. I see them with their friends laughing and happy. I see them working and playing; they are brown and strong and always smiling. Let us go away, father, from this place. I hate it. Let us go to Kief that I heard you talk of. We will be happier there."

"Nadja, don't try to deceive me. Look at the icon and answer this question: Have you given the true reason for your unhappiness? You are trying to blind my eyes."

The girl made no answer. She only sobbed. Sozontieff, ceasing to speak in the quiet passionless tones he had hitherto used, raised his voice threateningly. Turning first to Grisha, he ordered him to leave the room, and Grisha obeyed with a scowl. The door was looked behind him. Then Sozontieff returning close to Nadja seized her roughly by the shoulders and shook her.

"Girl, the truth—tell me the truth."

Nadja cried out in pain and terror, and tried to speak, but her tongue refused to utter a coherent word.

"You won't speak? You think you can hide things from me? I'll let you know to the contrary." He went to a recess in the stove, from which he took an old leather-bound Slavonic Bible, which he placed in her hands. "Now, girl, with this in your hands, if you speak not the truth the holy Wonder-Worker before whom you sit will strike you with blindness. It was with this book that your grandfather Piotr Samuilitch struck blind the 'ataman' Akseni when he came in pursuit of us as we were escaping from the Cossacks. Now answer!"

"You know Mikhail the Stundist!"

"Yes."

"When did he speak to you last? When did you last see him?"

"Two days ago."

"Quite right. Where did he speak to you?"

"Along the river; under the Blue Cliffs."

"What did he say to you? What passed between you?"

"I don't know. Oh, father, you torture me. Don't ask me any more questions. For God's sake leave me alone! I cannot answer you."

"You shall answer me," he said fiercely; "you have been carrying on a secret intrigue with my enemy, with a man who is fast leading the people into such error that

(*Continued on page 613.*)

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in mparison what they call Orthodoxy is pu y and truth itself. I have guessed it all ong. As a child he used to seek to lead yo astray. Now he is a man and you are a man. You know what you are doing. Yo shall tell me fully and clearly every detai f this miserable love-making of yours or hall kill you, yes, kill you like a dog. Do ou hear me?"

"ather," whispered Nadja hoarsely thr gh parched lips, "I have told you the tru. Why will you torment me? I did no to that place to meet the Stundist. I did ot even know he was there. Oh, if I had known he was to see me there, I would nev have gone—never! Look, I am telling e truth. I hold the Bible in my hand and look at the Wonder-Worker. I see, and m not blind."

"id you go to the Blue Cliffs to meet son one else? So the Stundist then is not the nly one whom you have allowed to con near you? If it was not the Stundist, it w s one of the Orthodox, one of those wh are condemned to hell fire. Who was it, Isk?"

Nadja gave no answer. She recognized that her father did not know so much as she had feared, and that his suspicions had all fixed on the wrong person. But she was determined not to divulge her secret, or breathe a syllable that would implicate Vladimir.

"ou are silent, girl; you think to hide this thing from me," began her father, "but I must know it. I have lived all these years an honored and honorable man. I have kept myself and all that is mine unspotted. Now in my old days it is revealed to me, but not by the voice of man, that my only child, the daughter whom I dearly love who was all I had on earth, is false to herself, false to me, false to her religion; that she has her secrets, her intrigues, that she is in terrible danger of falling into the deepest sin, if"—here he shot a quick glance at her—"if she has not fallen already." Then turning to the icon: "Answer me, Wonder-Worker. Has my daughter spoken truly?"

The half-crazed fanatic waited a moment for an answer, and then in deep tones he answered himself:

"She has spoken truly, but she has not told you all."

"Will she tell me all, O holy Nicholas?"

"She will tell you nothing more. I will tell you all."

"Has she been true to her faith? Has she gone hankering after a man of the false church? Has she brought disgrace on my grey hairs?"

"Yes, all that you say she has done."

"O Wonder-Worker, tell me how to win her back." Here his voice took an accent of indescribable pathos. "Tell me how she may be redeemed. May I not know who it is that has led her astray? May I not hear his name that I may keep his shadow from my door, that he may not further pollute my house?"

A long pause followed. Nadja's head had sunk low on her bosom; she had clasped her hands, and her long golden hair, which had been loosened in the fierce grip of her father, had fallen all about her shoulders. Sozontieff busied himself in lighting tapers before the icon until it glittered with ten thousand reflections; then extinguishing the lamp and kneeling down in front of his daughter, but with his face to the icon, he waited the answer. It came at last, the father speaking as if he was repeating something spoken to him. The questions were in his ordinary voice, and the answers deep and hoarse.

"Yes, you shall know his name."

"Is not the Stundist preacher?"

"No."

"One of his cursed flock!"

"No."

"Is it the Jew "kabak" keeper?"

"No."

"The priest? One of the silly crowd of idolaters?"

"No."

"Does he live in Slavo?"

"Not now."

"Where is he?"

"On the road to Kief."

"What!" Sozontieff turned with a fierce yell to his daughter, and seized her hand in his. "It is the Panitch. It is Pan Vladimir. Have you sunk so low? Have you forgotten what purity and honor are? You are a peasant's daughter, he is a noble. Do you know what that means? You are an Old Believer, he an idolater. Do you know what that means?" He flung her hands away and they came in sharp contact with the arm of the chair. The pain of the blow must have been acute, but she made no sign of having felt it. He looked at her eyes—they were shut. He put his hands on her cheeks—they were cold and clammy. He rose to his feet and turned again to the icon.

"One more question, O Wonder-Worker! What am I to do to redeem her? Can she not be brought back to me?"

"Impossible, save by death!"

"And will death purify her? Will she then become as one of the blessed? Will sin no longer cleave to her and do her injury?"

"Death will set her free, and only death. Read what the Lord told Abraham to do with Isaac."

At this answer Sozontieff staggered back, pushing away the tangled grey hair from his forehead and staring at the Wonder-Worker. Then taking his Slavonic Bible from Nadja's lap he turned the leaves to find the terrible chapter where Abraham journeyed to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son. He read the passage aloud, and when he came to how a ram was caught by its horns in the thicket and was offered up instead of Isaac his face brightened; he looked up at the icon.

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(To be Continued.)

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[*The above letter to the late W. O. Wyckoff, Esq., President Remington Typewriter Co., from Hon. Francis H. Wilson, Member of Congress, speaks for itself. The letter is published with the consent of Mr. Wilson.*]

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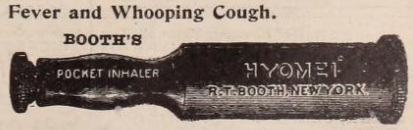

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...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

SOZONTIEFF LAID HIS DAUGHTER DOWN AND KNELT BESIDE HER.

CHAPTER XI.

The Quicksands.

SILENCE fell on the two strange creatures. The father motionless but agitated; the daughter almost paralyzed by fear. What dreadful thing was this her father was meditating? She knew not; but furtively watching his face she saw that he was slowly making up his mind to some decisive act.

He murmured to himself, "Was it for Isaac's sins that he was to be offered up? The book does not say. It was to prove Abraham. This is to prove me. But I do not understand. It said, 'Only death will set her free,' and now, 'She shall not die.' I am willing. Where is my land of Moriah? Afar off, or near? The river, the quicksands that is the place of sacrifice, and I believe there will be provided a sacrifice. Substitutes are in the plans of God, and I'll call the quicksands my Jehovah Jireh, because there the Lord will provide a substitute. And as I have not withheld my only daughter, God will bless me and mine, and we shall possess the gate of our enemies, and in our seed shall all Russia be blessed; and I will dwell on some grassy level steppe, perhaps like Beersheba, and my flocks and my herds will be around me, and Nadja's great broad sons will support my declining days, and hand down the pure truth to their children and children's children. Jehovah Jireh! But if he should not provide?"

At the thought a cold sweat broke out on the wretched man's face. It was with pale lips that he continued:

"What if I lose Nadja and no sacrifice is provided? I would be heartbroken." He looked up at the icon and waited. The answer came, Sozontieff speaking as before:

"Kuzma Sozontieff, is this your faith? Is this the faith that will remove mountains? Is this the faith that will bring a blessing? Rely on the Wonder-Worker."

He sank down on the earthen floor in a heap, and rested his head on the old Bible. The tapers were burning low. The silence in the cottage was terrible. When he rose the tapers had all expired, and only the dim light of the blue lampada flickered in the squalid room, and the sheen on the broad front of the icon came and went fitfully. He turned to Nadja who still reclined in the chair in her deep stupor.

"Nadja, rouse thee?" He spoke tenderly, using the endearing Thou. "The night is wearing to a close. It is after two. I hear the cocks in the village. Rouse thee, child." He gently took her hand, and she sighed deeply, trying to open her eyes, trying also to say something.

He took both her hands in his and chafed them. He opened her eyelids and looked into her eyes. He kissed her forehead. She shivered. "Nadja, Nadja!" he cried.

There was a faint sound outside the "izba" as of some one moving slowly over the sandy gravel.

Nadja heard the sound. She slowly opened her eyes. "Who's that outside, father? There's some one coming!"

"It is nothing, child. It is the wind thou hearest; there is a storm rising."

"Why is it so dark, father, and so cold? Light the lamps. I am afraid. There it is again! Do you hear that? It is at the window. Look!"

She had turned swiftly to the window. Uttering one long penetrating shriek, she fell senseless in her father's arms.

Sozontieff darted a glance at the window. There was a face there for a moment, only for a moment, and then it vanished. But the aspect of that face shook the iron nerves of the man, and he trembled. It was Grisha's face, white, drawn, distorted with passion, with dark, piercing, dreadful eyes.

Sozontieff paused irresolute, but only for a moment. His thoughts were away to those quicksands which he had fixed on as his Moriah—the place where he would emulate Abraham's sublime abnegation.

These quicksands lay close to the river about half a mile above the ferry. They were the special terror of the children who herded the cattle on the river meadowlands in Spring. Many a straying cow and sheep had been engulfed in them, and careful mothers used to exhort their boys to keep clear of them by narrating the true story of how, once upon a time, three lads, who had ventured beyond the grass, had been ruthlessly sucked into the quicksands and had never been heard of again.

It was this desolate and forbidding place that the ferryman, who knew every twist and turn of the broken paths through it, had fixed on as his Moriah, as the place where his daughter was to be offered in sacrifice. It is impossible to say what were the motives actuating Sozontieff in his choice of this spot. Although he was indifferent to the consequences to himself that might follow, in the event of the sacrifice being accepted, he was probably not averse to a spot for his action which would be free from the observation of others, and inclined to a place where a mode of death might be obtained without a violent laying of hands on his victim. Be this as it may, he determined on the quicksands as the place of sacrifice, and the more he reflected, if his mad processes of thought could be called reflection, the more he felt spurred on to his awful enterprise.

The sight of Grisha's face at the window relaxed his strong nerves, but only momentarily. He knew that his drudge was quite safe, that he neither understood what he might have overheard nor, if questioned, could he relate it intelligently to others. As soon as he obtained control of himself, he opened the door and peered out into the moonlit night calling Grisha. But Grisha did not reply; he had retired into the shade of some trees and was lying on the ground stealthily watching. He lingered a moment longer at the door, looking up at the sky, and gave a swift glance round at the moonlit scene before him. It was cloudy and the wind was rising, blowing in gusts from the river, and now and again great black shadows swept over the land. The ferryman receiving no answer, probably thought that Grisha had gone to lie down in the hayloft, and returned to the prone form of Nadja lying in the huge chair. It was a terrible shock she had received, for she lay there lifeless and inert. Her father peered at her staring eyes in the dark and hurriedly closed them, a nameless, shapeless fear congealing the blood in his veins. He dared not light the lamp, and a gust of wind from the open door had extinguished the lampada.

Nerving himself for what was to follow, he stood before the icon, and made three low obeisances, crossing himself swiftly and repeatedly; then falling on his knees, he touched the earthen floor three times with his forehead, all the while rapidly repeating prayers in Slavonic, and every now and then turning his face suddenly and suspiciously to the window. He knew that the wind was rapidly rising to a tempest, for the casement of door and window and the walls of the frail "izba" rattled and creaked in the blast.

The moon was shining right into the room, lighting up the white, corpse-like face of Nadja.

When Sozontieff rose from his devotions he hurriedly divested himself of his dark caftan, replacing it with a pure white linen garment, round which he wound a white sash. From the long coffer-like bench he took a few pieces of strong cord and a white handkerchief. With the cords he swiftly tied together first the hands and then the feet of his daughter. The handkerchief he stuffed into her mouth as a gag, should she become conscious and cry out. Then turning for the last time to the darkened face of the Wonder-Worker, he prostrated himself again and again: he fell on his knees and touched the earth with his forehead again and again, saying ever fresh prayers which sounded more like a choking gurgle than the words of a man. At last he rose and flinging the unconscious form of the girl over his shoulder, strode out of the door and faced the river.

He sped rapidly along the river-path with his burden, now and then furtively looking to his left and behind him, as though he feared that some one might notice him and follow. He reached the tall reeds, and plunging into their mazes with the security of one who perfectly knows his way, he wound in and out among them ever in the direction of the quicksands.

But the blowing wind and the rapid motion had revived Nadja. She felt herself bound and gagged, and in an agony of terror struggled to free herself. Sozontieff stopped for a moment in the shade of a clump of alders, laid his burden on the ground, adjusted the handkerchief and tightened the cords. But as he raised it again he thought he saw for a moment the dark form of something that might have been a man swiftly moving across the open space behind him to the shelter of the sedge. He concluded that it must be the shadow of a cloud sweeping across the moon. No one could be out there at this time of the night, and he pressed on. He tried to still Nadja, who kept up a monotonous moaning, but she struggled all the more fiercely to be free, cutting herself with the cords in her efforts. Sozontieff grew more and more uneasy. Every few yards he paused and looked behind him, and each time he looked he was aware of the pursuing shadow that paused as he paused, but kept ever gaining on him. "I shall be free of it, if it is human," he thought, "now that I have reached the mud," and picking his way carefully, jumping across dark stagnant pools, whose depth he knew not, and wading carefully across the intersecting streams.

It was a terrible night: the storm had become furious, a whistling, moaning gale sweeping swiftly across the tasselled tops of the reeds. Sozontieff panted hard as he breasted each explosive blast, and more than once he stumbled as though completely exhausted.

He was on the verge of the quicksands. The broad belt of shining white sand lay before him, and beyond that the rush of the dark waters of the rivers, the storm driving the spray from it into his face. The first few yards of sand were dry and firm—beyond it was soaking and seething in everlasting motion, sucking itself in little bubbles and whirls and eddies, silently, horribly. The ferryman shivered. Nadja felt his limbs shake under him and she struggled all the more, feeling that her only chance of escape lay in exhausting his strength. He laid her down on the hard sand and knelt beside her, holding her firmly. His eyes were riveted on a clump of stunted willows that he had just passed for the haunting shadow that followed him was somewhere there and motionless, and he was meditating whether he should not wait for the fast approaching dawn or return to the clump to discover what that shadow was. But a look at his daughter decided him. Her strength was gone, she lay almost still, she was choking, the blood trickled from her lacerated wrists. He would act at once and see whether she was to be the sacrifice or whether another would be provided.

Slowly, for his own strength was sinking fast, and he tottered as he stood, he raised his daughter with both hands high over his head. He looked down at the moving sand and he quailed, for he thought he heard a stealthy step behind him. His cap had fallen off, and his long grey hair and beard streamed out behind him. Again he raised the girl, gathering all his strength for one final effort, to throw her into the seething mass before him, but the terrible step was close behind him and approaching rapidly. Sozontieff, with a wild yell that was heard far above the roar of the tempest, turned round, and Nadja fell from his unnerved hands. With a spring like a tiger's the approaching figure was on his shoulders, and a long knife was plunged deep into his neck.

He fell like a stone, muttering something. A terrible face, distorted with hate, a misshapen, humped figure bent low to listen to what the dying man was saying, and laughed mockingly, a far more hideous sound amid the storm than the yell of horror that had preceded it.

Like lightning the cords that bound Nadja were cut by the dripping knife, and the handkerchief taken from her mouth. The hunchback then dragged her from the sand on to the grass and fled, fled far over the meadowland and away out on the steppe, never resting until the sun was high in the heavens, and until his limbs worn out with the fearful excitement of the night could carry him no farther.

It was late in the evening when he made his way by devious paths back to the ferryman's "izba," a glorious evening, calm and bright. He was not quite sure whether or not Nadja would receive him kindly, but he fancied she ought, as he had saved her life. He crept cautiously up to the house. The door was closed, which was strange on so fine an evening. Gently opening it he look round, scowling at the icon.

But Nadja was not there. A horrible fear that she was still at the quicksands and unable to move, seized him, perhaps she was lying on the cold grass where he had left her, thirsty, hungry. Hastily putting some bread in his pocket he rushed out of the house and tore madly along the river bank and through the mud to the quicksand.

"Nadja!" he called, "Nadja!" There was no response. She was gone. But the knife was there, and the long, stained knife beside it. Every fibre of his body thrilled with dread, with a terrible presentiment of coming trouble. Dragging the cold body across to the edge of the quicksands he pushed it in. It slowly sank and the long knife with it.

Grisha looked wildly around him, calling in vain the name of his young mistress, and hearing nothing but the ugly rush and lap of the water, musical no longer; then speeding distractedly home again through the dark, his fingers in his ears to keep out the sounds of a myriad frogs which were croaking out their exultation at his misery.

(To be Continued.)

* Published by arrangement with Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, Chicago, and Toronto.

...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

NADJA'S PILGRIM FRIENDS ABOUT TO SET OUT FOR KIEF.

CHAPTER XII.

Nadyejda's Flight.

WHEN Nadja at last became conscious, the morning sun was shining full on her face. She stirred uneasily on the grass. The return to a full knowledge of what had happened occupied a few minutes of the most exquisite pain, and she could not at first say whether it was pain of body or of mind. She felt numbed and stupid, and although the air was warm and pleasant, to her it was cold and raw. Her ankles and wrists ached with an almost intolerable pain, her mouth and throat were parched. She opened her eyes slowly to the blinding flood of light and looked on a scene so peaceful and calm that it surely could not have been the scene of the fearful storm and the still more fearful human passions of a few hours ago. It could not have been a dream, else why was she here? Why were her wrists raw and bleading? What was all that blood on her dress? And then her heart beat wildly. Where was her father? Why had he left her here alone? She rose on one elbow and looked about her. What was that lying there? What were those wet red stains on the sand beside it?"

"Father, father?" she cried, "Is it you? Father, what has happened. Come to me."

Mutely and terror-stricken she crawled from the grass over to the sand where the dead man lay. She gazed on him with horror. She touched his cold hands, his colder face: she felt his heart, it had ceased to beat forever. There was the awful gaping wound in the neck. Who had done this thing? What had happened? She knelt beside the dead body and chafed the hands, and tied a handkerchief round the gash in the neck. She knelt there and thought.

And then the impulse to fly seized her and it grew stronger and stronger until it became irresistible. But whither? Vladimir had told her that she should go to Kief. She was all alone now in the world. Vladimir was gone. Mikhail was gone. Her father who had loved her in his own way was—she felt the cold stiffening hands again, and gazed at the rigid face before she could say the fearful word—"dead."

Springing to her feet she thought for a moment with hands pressed to her throbbing temples. It must be Kief, she felt. Then bathing her stained hands and burning wrists in a pool of water, she turned her back on the fearsome sands and plunging into the reeds, sought the road homewards. It seemed as though she followed the path instinctively, and her progress along it was one of mad speed. She reached the old "izba." There stood the chair as it had been placed the night before, on the door lay the book of the ordeal. The face of the Wonder-Worker was cold and impassive as ever, and she shivered as she glanced at it for a moment.

She entered her room, her mind made up to fly. Kief, Kief, refuge, refuge, rang through her brain. She tore off her blood-stained dress, and lighting a fire burned it to ashes. She hastily rummaged through her little store of belongings and tied up in a small bundle what she would require. It was a relief to her that Grisha did not come in, he was doubtless looking after the cattle. A little purse with a few silver roubles in it that her mother had left her she put in her pocket. And then with tears blinding her eyes she went to a secret corner that only she knew about, and took from it some withered rose leaves and a few scrappy letters, the letters carefully tied with ribbon. She stood looking at these shabby memorials of a love that was dead, as though debating something with herself, but at last she made up her mind, and, kissing them passionately, consigned them to the fire, the weird thought striking her with what strange ingredients that flame had been fed. Then taking up her bundle and averting her head from the icon, passed out of the cottage, carefully closing the door.

It was still early morning and no one was astire yet, not even the hired man who worked the ferry.

So much the better for her purpose, she thought, and running down to the river unlocked the fasfenings of the clumsy ferry-boat, and, jumping on board, set it running on its chain across the river.

It was over sixty miles to the holy city, and the broad steppe lay before her shining in the morning sun. At any other time she would have taken infinite delight in the rich broidery of flowers that stretched all around her right to the horizon. She would have luxuriated in the pleasant May warmth and in the even morning light, in the matchless melody of the larks and the chirp and hum of myriads of busy insects; but now she went on her way unheeding. On both sides and in front of her there was not a soul visible. She dared not look back at the village crowning the opposite bank—she might see some one.

All through the morning she walked, and little by little the calm and peace of the steppe filtered into her soul, and the troubles, the ineffable sorrows that were there were soothed.

Ah, she was a true Russian. There is no one of that wonderful race who does not find solace and elevation in its illimitable steppes. And if his march is towards Kief the better. In the ear of every Russian, from the frozen shores of the Arctic to the vine-clad hills of the Crimea, Kief is a word that fills his mind full of the ideas of religion and poetry, and appeals to everything in him that is supersensuous and remote from the troubles and cares of his life. No steppes are so beloved by the Russians as those around Kief; they are level almost as the sea; they invite one to go on and on, and evoke limitless reveries of melancholy and hope.

As the day advanced Nadja met an occasional peasant driving a bullock cart, and once or twice a boy herding a flock of weather-beaten sheep. These people accosted her kindly, and would have stopped on the road to chat, but she hurried past them, never daring to rest when anyone was in sight. A gourd full of water which she carried supplied her with drink, and some rye bread was her food, but neither hunger nor thirst distressed her, and she pressed on.

Towards evening she skirted a village, and a group of merry girls in a field ran up to her, and asked her where she came from, and whither she was bound.

"From the other side of the river," she replied; "and I am going to Kief on pilgrimage."

When they saw her sweet face, and heard her gentle, sad voice, and noticed how she walked lame, they wondered that she was all alone, and that she did not wear the bast sandals of the pilgrims which keep the feet cool.

"Stop the night in our village," one bright-faced girl begged her; "Father is the priest, and he loves the pilgrims."

"Or, if you like, you can come to our house," said another; "father is the elder, and we will let you have warm water for your tired feet, and milk and eggs, and fresh bread."

"Perhaps," said a girl who had not yet spoken, "perhaps you would like to go on a little, and join some pilgrims who are resting for the night beside a little river about two versts farther. There are two farmhouses near, and some haystacks. The pilgrims were here an hour ago, and are good people, and will be glad to see you."

"Yes, yes," said Nadja, relieved, "I will go on. God bless you all!" She kissed them, and her scalding tears fell on their pure young faces.

With slow and halting steps, she continued on her journey, now so weary a journey, each verst longer than the verst before it. It was growing dark. At last she saw the lights of the pilgrims' camp fire. She had thought to have avoided all intercourse with every one, but the fatigues of the long road, and the fearful strain of the previous night, had well-nigh exhausted her. Poor Nadja felt ashamed of her hesitancy in joining the pilgrims. She stood and watched them, wondering curiously what sort of people they were. There were ten of them, she counted, six men and four women. They were not from hereabouts, she was certain. The dress of the women which she could make out told her that much. They were from the north probably as they wore such warm things. At last mustering all her courage, she approached their circle. They are pilgrims, she thought, and they are going to the holy places; their hearts surely are soft; they will remember the example of the blessed Saviour.

In the gathering dusk they saw her approach, with her beautiful, sad face and gracious air of humility, and when they noticed her, sad and humble, they one and all rose from about the fire and gave her a warm welcome, and wished her a good evening and good health.

How kind they were to her! Had the quest they were on smoothed over their rude rough natures, or was it the influence of the lovely golden-haired stranger who had entered their midst?

They deserve a word of notice, these guileless pilgrims, wandering towards Kief. They will not accompany us through our story, but they are some of the best people we shall meet, you and I, as we journey together.

Nadja was quite right: they had come from the north, from the banks of the far-distant Viatka, away beyond Kazan on the Volga, and had left their homes in mid-winter, braving innumerable dangers and unheard-of hardships, to reach the shrines and relics so dear to the heart and imagination of every true Russian. Are we to blame these simple and untaught peasants if the pure spiritual truths of the Gos the great truths of the equable omnip ence of the Lord throughout his whole verse, became to them vague and unr Let us by all means wish there was gre light, and work for the diffusion of it us not condemn, or wish to see extingu ed, the faint flicker that lightens the al hyperborean darkness of that land.

All through their long journey—and s pilgrims come from Archangel and th mote provinces of Siberia—the pilgrims treated kindly by every one they meet, the poor among them are furnished abundance to eat and drink. With gourd of water, his tattered sandals of or birch bark, his wallet and staff tramps steadily along to the holy city, when he returns, he returns a privil and sanctified being. He has expiated sins. Here is the deadly error.

The leader of the little band of pilg which Nadja had now joined was an man of seventy, who had been on pilg age twice before, and enjoyed a great tation for sanctity among the village the Viatka. He approached Nadja held out his hand.

"Daughter," he said, "you are wel among us. We are resting here for night; and if you rest with us we will glad. You look tired. Eat a bit with

They opened their wallets, and on a cloth on the grass they spread their bread and onions, and salt, and their g of pure water from the stream that murred past them at their feet. The light gleamed on their strong bronzed faces. Then they all crossed thems devoutly. Old Makari, the leader, r psalm, and they ate their supper in sil Nadja tried hard to join in the ple prattle that followed, the talk about t tle excitements and incidents of the but she could not feel at ease, and rel into silence. To some questions whic woman asked her she gave as straigh ward answers as she could; others sh ed not answer, and she hated to lie.

"Daughter," said old Makari, "w not bother you with our questions. Fo selves we are simple people, and ever may know who we are, and what w and whence we came, and whither w but we feel we have no right to bothe with questions if you would rather n swer them. I remember once I wa shooting foxes along the Viatka. winter, and as night was coming o we were far from any village, my co ion and I thought we would rest whe were for the night. So we cut down pine branches and kindled a great fir supper, and lay down to sleep. It w very long before we heard a dog bark

"We sat up, and looking in the dir of the sound, we noticed a great wolf approaching the fire, and behind h young man carrying a gun, and with dagger in his belt. He came right fo to the fire and smiled, and told us h lost his way, but discovering our foo in the snow, he had followed them u saw the fire. Would we take him in night, he asked us, and his frirnds be sure to follow later. Of course we him in. He needn't have asked.

"We sat up, all night together, and on a roaring crackling fire.

"Just at day-break his friends ca blowing their horns and making a tr dous rumpus, and very glad they w find him. He asked me in what vill lived, and what was my name. I told of course. Would you believe it? days the "Uriadnik" came running my "izba" to say that he had a let me. 'A letter for me!' I said, 'I have had a letter in my life.' 'Well, here said the 'Uriadnik.' I learnt it heart. 'Thank you, friend,' said the 'Thank you, friend Makari, for a night's lodging and excellent co May you live long, and catch many Constantine.' 'And he told me to giv this,' said the 'Uriadnik,' handing magnificent rifle, that I haven't da use since, it is so lovely. Now wh you think of that? Well, I told yo story because who knows if our little here isn't a grand duchess in disguise Indeed, I don't think there is much di for she quite looks it."

Every one laughed at the old pleasantry. Even Nadja herself s "I'm not a grand duchess," she said, a peasant's daughter."

"Well, maybe we love you all the for that," was Makari's rejoinder.

(To be continued.)

*Published by arrangement with Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, Chicago, and Toronto.

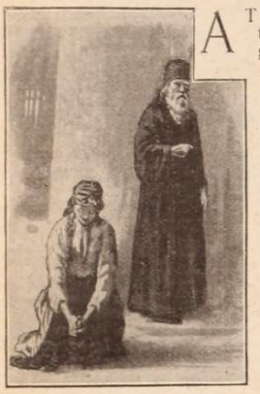
...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Sophia's.



"THE OLD SACRISTAN LOOKED AT HER.."

AT daybreak the pilgrims were awake, refreshed by their night's rest, but Nadja, who could not sleep until morning had drawn near, did not waken. Makari, whose heart was with the girl, ordered his little company to delay their setting out until her sleep was over. So they shaded her face from the light, and sat down to wait. The poor girl's night had been full of the bitterest memories and the most sombre forebodings. Her thoughts seemed to go round and round like the wheel of a water-mill, everything that she touched was tossed about, nothing grasped.

Thanks to the respite afforded her she wakened refreshed. Some rye-bread and a drink of water from the stream served her as breakfast, and the march was resumed. This day's tramp proved still more fatiguing than yesterday's; towards midnight it became scorching hot, the steppe shimmering, the horizon wavering unsteadily. Footsore, sick, and worn out, Nadja could go no farther, and the pilgrims, seeing her miserable plight, gladly accommodated themselves to her position. They rested in the shade of a ruined outhouse and drank tea until the sun was low in the west. Old Makari went on a catering expedition to a neighboring village, and brought back eggs and fresh bread and a big pan of milk. Every one did his or her best to contribute to Nadja's comfort, and as the hours went by her spirits rose and the over-powering fatigue which she could not understand, and which had often visited her of late, was hardly noticed.

Late in the afternoon Makari read his favorite Psalms and the Gospel for the day, and the little caravan again started, moving slowly and intending to walk far into the night. They went on and on over the wide-extending, now undulating, plains of brilliant green, with deepening shades in the hollows as the sun sank lower. On the vast girdle of steppe around them receding to the sky, they noticed at times some shadowy village in the dusky diffused light of evening, its white church tower and glittering golden cross rising above the surrounding haze like a lighthouse from a northern sea. And then night came on and the steppe became redolent, and the perfume of the flowers and herbs and spring grasses, hardly noticeable in the heat of the day, came about them and dwelt with them all the night through. It was long past midnight when they approached their resting-place. They had been gradually topping a long low hill which for an hour had narrowed their horizon, a long black ridge it looked in the moonlight. Makari drew near to Nadja.

"We're just at the top, my dear, and now you'll have a surprise. Do you see that winding white thing like a long broad ribbon over there? That's the river again. You will notice a misty dark shadow beyond it. That's the forest, the forest of pines, the great strong, straight pines that we love. They say on the Viatka that the smell of them keeps disease and death away. In winter, my dear, you hear the howling of wolves in that forest over there. But look!" he pointed a little to the left and the pilgrims gathered round him in the moonlight. "What's that shining there?" His eyes gleamed with excitement. "And near it something big, but not shining so brightly, and that long white shadow! Ah, that is the cross over the holy Lavra—in the darkest night it shines just as brightly as during the day to guide pilgrims; and beside it is the great dome of St. Sophia's, although when you get to Kief you will find a good long distance between them. And that tall white thing is the bell tower at the Lavra, and when we hear its bells to-morrow, my little brothers and sisters, our wanderings will be over and our hearts will be glad. Lord have mercy!" exclaimed the old pilgrim, falling on his knees. Every one followed his example, and they strained their eyes out across the moonlit river, and along the dark pine forests to where the shining cross rose high in the heavens over the shrines of Kief.

It was towards mid-day that the pilgrims approached the city and saw each glittering dome and cupola coming out into clearer outline and rising nobly on the lofty bank of the wide stream. They went on through trees, and Nadja long remembered the luxurious green and rustle of their leaves, and the shadow-dappled path among the beeches and oaks, with glimpses of sunny greensward and shining river seen through the boughs. They made their way through the picturesque streets to the hospices prepared for the reception of such as they were. They walked in silence, touched and thrilled with the sombre solemnities of the place, and Nadji, notwithstanding her wretchedness and misery, felt compelled to accept the spirit of the old pilgrim city, and to believe that healing, or at any rate comfort, was at hand.

When Makari and his party started out on their first expedition to the catacombs she preferred to remain in the hospice, and pleaded weariness. She wished to be by herself a little, to collect her thoughts, and settle some plan for the future. Perhaps she could get work somewhere. She had heard of girls who had gone to Kief and even to Moscow to seek work. But she did not know how to set about it. She would confide part of her story to Makari when he returned, and ask his advice: he was a good man and knew Kief.

The pilgrims had said they would not be home until evening, and Nadja, feeling refreshed, and having an hour or two to spare, took courage to leave the hospice and wander down through some long bare streets into the town, into the graceful Kreshtchatik, one of the pleasantest streets in Europe. Nadja knew Kief in a way, that is to say she had read what her father's books said about it, and she felt a shock of delighted surprise once or twice in her wanderings when she noticed a church or street corner that had helped to illustrate her books. She wondered at the soaring white campaniles and clustering golden domes rising over many a stately street vista: and as the sun got low the mixture of strange and melancholy harmonies from the bells pealing for vespers, brought somehow a message of peace to her that was inexpressibly comforting.

Up one long hilly street she went, to a church whose bells she thought were sweeter than the rest. It was built high on a lofty terrace, overlooking the broad reaches of the Dnieper. An old woman sitting on the steps to the terrace told her it was the cathedral of St. Andrew. Its western front and silvered dome blazed in the lowering sun. Nadja would not go inside — the glories of the outside filled her to overflowing as she stood on the terrace, and listened on the lee side to the sigh of the wind, and looked down on the gleaming river, and the immense plain with the mellowing light stealing over it, and the far distant fringe of blue pines, where Makari told her the wolves howl at night.

Hours on that high terrace would not have broken this peasant girl's enchantment at the wonderful scene. But the day was waning and the pilgrims would soon be home. She could not, however, resist the pleasure of finding for herself another way to the hospice, so, speeding through a colorless and tame street that had nothing to interest her, she arrived at an open and dusty square and stood still in wonder and delight.

"St. Sophia's, St. Sophia's!" she exclaimed, "I know it; that's the bell tower."

Nadja longed to enter the famous cathedral, perhaps the most venerated place in Russia, but here, as at St. Andrew's, the outside had also its irresistible power over her. She entered the low gateway under the majestic campanile and gazed at the exquisite mouldings that adorned its gleaming sunlit walls. The vendors of beads and amulets and many another piece of wood and shell and stone from Jerusalem or dipped in Jordan, sat in the gateway. She passed into a fair open space with trees, and before her stood the strange ugly mass of the cathedral, with dingy walls and the undisturbed dust thick on them, with jutting and irregular corners, apses and little chapels and deep cornices, doves resting and cooing or fluttering about in an altogether aimless and happy sort of way. From the blinding light of the roof she turned to the squat walls and they looked cold, with their patches of dark green moldiness — weather stains, and trailing weeds, and withered stalks of grass in corners.

The poor girl had never felt so lonely or so stricken. On the lofty terrace of St. Andrew's she had light, and space, and air, a sense of freedom and of a beyond. Here before the low portal of the cathedral her sorrows flooded in on her, and the tears, bravely held back so long, could be pent up no longer.

To seek some corner gloomier than the rest where she might escape observation and pray, was her only thought as she entered the dark church, where the pervading perfume of incense hung heavy in the air, where the gloom was only made gloomier by the twinkling of tapers and colored lampadas hung before the icons.

Service was concluding at one of the altars as she entered, one of the innumerable services of the Greek church. There was the solemn chanting of monks and the long drawn mournful sweetness of some boys' voices — all unutterably sad, all weighing heavily on a heart that wanted cheering, that wanted some word of intelligible sympathy. Here and there were the scattered forms of worshippers standing or kneeling in different parts of the nave, bowing, crossing themselves, prostrating themselves, some sighing and weeping in distant corners, sorrowing for those who had left them lonely or were about to leave them — ineffectual, pathetic, almost tragic figures silent there in the obstructed light of the old sanctuary.

When the chanting ceased there was not a sound but the echo of an occasional slow footstep to disturb the deathlike stillness of the place.

With her colored handkerchief low over her face Nadja sought a distant corner where no one was. She sank on a low seat at the base of a massive square pillar, and looked around at the icons, trying to decide before which she should kneel. Her eyes took in the quiet patient brown faces of old world monks and nuns with perpendicular Greek and Slavic inscriptions written around or below them, with something to tell in their faces the like of which one is not used to hear. But she passed them by. There were exquisitely sweet faces of Virgins and Babes. There were enraptured visages of inspired prophets and martyrs dimly posturing through the grime and smoke and mishaps of centuries. But none of them penetrated to the girl's sorrow; they had no message for her, no satisfying actuality.

One streaming shaft of light athwart the dome fell on the picture of a crowd of worshipping monks with woe-begone gaunt visages and world-worn eyes; and under their feet she read through her tears the pathetic invitation in old Slavic letters, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." She knew the words. She remembered them in Mikhail's New Testament. She knew who spake the words, and from her darkening place below the pillar she turned her wistful blue eyes again and again upward to the molten dusky light of the dome. "Come unto Me," knocked hard at her heart.

From the glory of the dome she tried to pierce the gloom around her, and for a moment or two could not, but at last the brown icons with their dull metal plaques reappeared, and she shuddered as she thought of home and the Wonder-Worker. She shrank farther into the gloom, crouching along the wall, hardly knowing, certainly not caring, where she went. All at once her gaze was riveted on a picture, old, dingy, unheeded in a corner, a picture of Supreme Act, the Great Sacrifice, and knelt before it in awe. O, the agon face with the clotted hair crowning through which the sharp thorns show O, the lonely anguish in the closing e and the bleeding hands and heart and The things that Mikhail had told h the happier days came crowding upon memory. It was the Crucified One had said, "Come unto me," but how c she come, how find the rest? There no help for her in the pictured F Dimly she aspired to something beyon spectacle of pain and grief that so m her heart.

For awhile her own personal sor were swallowed up in her unspeakable for the Man of Sorrows. She sobbed able to restrain herself. A monk, th sacristan, who was going his roun tinguishing tapers before closing the c dral for the night, heard her and turn look in that direction. He felt sorry way, but he had seen in his forty ye the old church many a sobbing woman passed on. He had no comfort to He could only prescribe the old mo prescriptions, and these, he felt, Nadj not want. He passed on. But one ness he did—he left her undisturbed. I his duty to tell the few stragglers sti in the church that they must retire. I cided he would tell every one else first would leave the girl a few minutes l He remembered a golden-haired sist had had forty years ago and more, and dered if she still lived, if she ever th of the brother who had renounced the and its vanities.

He cast another and softer look at recumbent figure, and stealthily going lighted three tapers from those he l his hand, and placed them before a of the Virgin, knowing no better, most instinctively murmuring a p found nowhere in his liturgies, for the of the weeping girl and the comfort soul.

But the old sacristan was not th one that evening in the cathedral Sophia who had been drawn to I Had her thoughts been less trouble her eyes less dim as she sat on the plinth of the great pillar, she migh noticed that a lady in black with h veiled was kneeling before an icon cl side her. The lady had been in the dral for an hour or so, and had lister voutly to the monk's chanting a evening hymn that the boys had And then she had gone to the old sa and bought some tapers from him. altar to altar, from icon to icon sl moved about lighting the tapers an ing them before her favorite saints, c herself devoutly from time to tin kneeling now and then to say a pra

As she knelt near Nadja the pale ed face of the girl, so sweet and sorrowful, found a home in her h once. Here was a pilgrim girl she t but it is not to touch the sacred r tramp through the catacombs that here. Why is she alone? Her fa pure and so beautiful. Who is she is in great trouble.

When Nadja rose to seek the s of the corner, where she found the of the Crucifixion, the lady could watch her, and wistfully. She s sink to the floor and wept for h her sympathizing heart shot a gratitude to the old sacristan as sh tively interpreted his action.

"God bless him," she murmur shall have a new cloak to-morrow silver icon of St. Anthony."

"Sister," said the lady bending prone figure and speaking in tender "little sister, my little troubled so is it? Let me help you. It is gettin dear, in the church. Let us go out under a tree; and tell me everythin your sister. I'll help you. I'm in myself, and we'll go and cry toget help you to rise, dear."

Nadja slowly crossed the soundi and the lady's arm was around h to support her. The old sacristan the door, and the lady gave him h cupied hand and said, "God ble father." The sacristan sighed w eyes earthward, and the women w into the open grassy space where t clear light that precedes the twili lingered. There was no one near, a sought a seat together under a great ing elm.

(To be continued.)

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...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

GRISHA EXPLAINS TO THE GENERAL.

CHAPTER XIV.

Grisha and the General.

THE sudden and complete disappearance of the ferryman and his daughter was a mystery that the peasants of Slavo could not fathom. Search was made in all likely places without avail. The theory started by some one that Sozontieff had again gone off on his wanderings was untenable, because all his clothes, and books, and his icon of St. Nicholas, which he was known to venerate so highly, were intact. The search instituted by the General showed that Nadja had probably taken a few things with her, but no one could be quite sure of this. Grisha came in for much of the questioning—when he had seen his master and young mistress last, and where; if he had heard them speak of leaving Slavo, and so on. But either he would not or could not understand the questions, at any rate no one understood his evasive replies. He was cunning enough to give misleading answers, he certainly gave untrue ones. The only consideration that appeared to throw any light on the strange event was the ferry boat on the other side of the river. They had started for Kief during the night, perhaps on some urgent business, and might soon return. But as week followed week, and nothing was heard either of Sozontieff or his daughter, the village gave up speculating on their disappearance, and only spoke of it occasionally as one of those inexplicable things that sometimes happen on earth which God in his own good time would perhaps clear up.

The old General was uneasy about it all. He had an idea that Grisha probably knew more than he liked to tell, and his intelligence, more cultivated than that of the peasants, easily detected Grisha's subterfuges, and sinuous methods of replying to simple questions.

One evening, a month or so after the disappearance of the Sozontieffs, the General was sitting alone in his room. It was twilight and fast darkening, and the old man's thoughts were in keeping with the fading day and the fast-approaching night. Since Vladimir's departure, his health, of late years so uncertain, had been a source of much uneasiness to him; his strength was fast declining, and he got no sleep.

Ah, if he could only sleep!

And with his slowly ebbing life the thoughts of how it had been mis-spent—the idleness, extravagance, vice, vacuousness that had marked it, became more and more a source of trouble to him, and to gain peace he turned to where, alas! he could not find it—to endless prayers and prostrations to his saints; to his hair shirt, to his books of devotion. If he could only do God some signal service, was his vain and foolish wish. If he could only show the Almighty how true a son of the Church he was!

And why could he not? Here at his very gates were the arch-enemies of the Orthodox faith, the men who were fast beguiling the simple peasantry, bringing in the soul-destroying tenets of Luther. He would begin a crusade against the Stundists and evince his zeal. These were his thoughts as he sat alone in the fading light of that May evening. But somehow down in the depths of his heart he doubted the efficacy of all this service. Could this make amends? he asked himself. Would this be restitution? Ah, restitution, that was the word that stuck. That was the word that threw his thoughts back twenty years,—to the cruel deceptions that followed one on the other at that time,—his flight to Moscow, and the utterly base and cruel desertion of the woman he had vowed to love. And if that had been all—but there was more. There was the terrible story the ferryman had told him of the child exposed beside the flooding river. Why had she done this? Why there of all places? Was it the insane thought that if no one found it, its poor deformed body would soon be at rest? But even this was not the worst. There was the night years ago in Moscow when he formed one of that gay company of men sitting around their champagne in the Hermitage Gardens, amid the din of a thousand blatant voices, the clinking of glasses, the rasping notes of empty laughter. They were boisterously enjoying some drunken witticism when there passed one whom memory forced him to recognize. Was it despair that had marked her as its own for ever? Ah, why dream of restitution? the General thought; it is impossible, impossible.

The General let his head sink on his breast. The thoughts of the miserable man were beyond his strength to bear. It was quite dark now.

"Your excellency," said the butler, opening the door and letting in a flood of light on the huddled-up old man. The servant started. "Your excellency, Grisha, the fool from the ferry, is here, and says he must see you. This is the fourth night running that he has come here bothering to see you, and last night he made such a row because we would not let him in that I boxed his ears, and to-night——"

"You boxed his ears!" The old man started from his chair and rushed at the servant with blazing eyes and clenched hands. "You struck Grisha! You! You scullion! You low-born lackey." The General raised his hand, but suddenly mastering himself, he turned helplessly back to his chair. His voice was low and hoarse when he spoke.

"Bring candles, and draw the blinds. Tell the boy I will see him."

The servant bowed low and retired, and after he had attended the General with the candles he told his fellows in the kitchen that in his opinion the master was just as mad as Grisha, and that when he saw him in such a towering passion he actually saw a likeness in him to the ferryman's fool. Wasn't it strange? he asked.

And then he began a long rigmarole about his mother, who had nursed a prince in St. Petersburg, always declared that she could not see a bit of difference between him and her own boy except for a wart on his arm, which of course wasn't on the face, and made no matter.

Grisha entered the General's room gazing slowly and deliberately on all sides, taking no notice of the master of the house who sat there in his chair, shrunken, fixedly watching every movement of his visitor with a fascinated stare. Certainly Grisha's was a weird enough figure. His long, lank, black hair fell about a death-pale face, the eyes large and deep-sunken—the only redeeming feature in a hopelessly marred and senseless visage. There was the terrible hump, the long restless arms, the misshapen legs. And what the butler in his quip in the servants' hall said he saw, the General saw only too plainly. In the fool's face he saw the distorted image, the tragic burlesque, of his own features.

"Grisha, come here, nearer. Now what is it you want? Isn't it late for you?"

"Yes, it's late, but I like the late—ever since master went away."

Now whether it was the General's perceptions were keener than those of his peasantry, or that Grisha took greater trouble to express himself clearly this evening, his words and ideas had a coherence and meaning to the General that only Nadja and sometimes Mikhail could discover in them.

"Are you not lonely, Grisha, since the ferryman went away? Would you not like him to come back?"

"No, I'm not lonely. I am out all day watching the sheep untill Nadja comes back. Master will never return."

"How does Grisha know that?"

"The icon told me, the Wonder-Worker." Grisha's eyes looked shiftily from corner to corner of the room, searching for the General's icon, and when he found it he made three low obeisances before it."

"The icon!" exclaimed the General, incredulously, "the icon told you!"

"Yes, it's about the icon that I came here. I want you to take it away."

"But it is not mine, and besides, I have my own icons."

"Yes, but this icon speaks, and yours does not. It told the ferryman everything he wanted to know, and since he went away it has been speaking to me."

Again the incredulous smile on the General's face, but to please Grisha he fell in with his humor.

"And what has the icon been saying to Grisha?"

"It wanted to tell me all about Nadja and master, where they were and why they went away, but I was afraid and ran out of the "izba." It told me one morning that it must be hung up in your room, that it has much to say to you about yourself and about Panitch Vladimir. Panitch has heard the icon speak to master when he used to come to see Nadja."

"To see Nadja! Vladimir!"

"Yes, he used to come often, but when she began to cry and get white he came no more. I heard the icon tell master all about Panitch."

It was most puzzling to the General. The idea of a speaking icon was of course pure nonsense, although he was no stranger to the notion often entertained among the more religious of the peasantry that the icon constantly inspires their actions and makes suggestions. But there was more here than he knew, and Grisha must be humored. The boy lived in abject fear of the icon, and ever since Sozontieff's disappearance he had carefully obscured its face with a cloth. The cottage still remained unoccupied, and Grisha dared not live there. So he hit upon the expedient of trying to induce the General to remove the Wonder-Worker. He would in this way be rid of a constant terror. During the night he would often rise from his bed in the haystack to see that the curtain still hung before it. He was as firm a believer in its supernatural powers as the ferryman had been, and imagined that its terrible voice could penetrate to any hiding-place he might prepare for himself near the cottage. He was not afraid of any revelation it might make to the General about the murder. He had a notion that Vladimir was the ultimate cause of Sozontieff's death, and he knew that the General loved Vladimir.

"Grisha, you say the icon knows all about Vladimir and about the ferryman and his daughter. Now suppose I bring it up here, and it refuses to tell me anything, what then?"

"It will speak, Barin. It will tell you strange things. You will hear how master was killed. Yes," Grisha bent forward and whispered with his eyes aflame, "he was killed at the sands. Come and I'll show you the place. I'll show it to you if you don't ask who did it. The icon will tell you Nadja is alive. I know where she is."

The General's head was bowed, and from the disconnected words of the fool some connected thoughts were revealing themselves. They were awful thou Grisha interrupted his reverie.

"Barin, let us go for the icon. I show you where it is, and you'll ta down from the wall, and bring it up Keep it until Nadja comes. But never come for it," he added, "she's of it and hates it like I do."

The General made no answer. He thinking of other things and of other and when Grisha grew insistent he t his gaze on the half-witted youth ar membered what he was, and who he and shuddered. At any rate here might be some restitution attempted could give this boy care and guardian all too late, perhaps, but he would tr

"Grisha, come nearer; nearer still.

The hunchback approached, and t man put out his hand and placed it long tangled black hair, so unkemp uncared for. He ran his fingers thro muttering "Grisha, poor Grisha, only knew.". He looked at his grim his toil-stained hands, his tattered clothing, and thought of the slave's must have led. "It shall cease," he mined, the boy must live with hi again he looked into the fool's eyes, and stroked his hair and his face with his white be-ringed fingers

"Grisha, would you like to live h live here with me in this house? W let the icon stay where it is, and it not worry you if you lived here."

It was all inexplicable to poor G the fondling hand, the gentle look old man, the strange request to liv him. Again the General spoke th words, and Grisha began to realize i

"No, no, Barin; I will wait at th for Nadja. Some day she'll return ferry her across. She would come when I am here, and I must be ther she comes. But the icon must be down. She will never live there wh remains. Take it away, Barin. away to-night."

The moon was shining throu young woods and on the dew-s grass as these two made their way twisting bye-paths, avoiding the down to the river. The river lo milky mystic lake before them; the man's squalid, black cottage lay shadow of the misty sand dunes General held Grisha's arm, the hun supporting and directing his feeble

"Grisha, Grisha," he said repe "come and live with me."

"When Nadja comes," was h answer.

They entered the cottage, and t eral struck a light.

"There it is," said the fool, poi the curtained icon, "take it down, away. It is yours. It will tell yo you ought to know."

The icon was taken down from t the General standing on Sozontieff

"Take this also," said Grisha, his companion the old Slavonian "It is the book that strikes yo when you tell lies. Nadja told th Only Panitch told lies, but then h had the book in his hands. Put it hands when he comes from the v ask him where Nadja is."

Grisha crouched down on his po bed which he had occupied since t was masterless, buried his face in h and sobbed as from a broke "Nadja, Nadja," he kept repeating back. He's gone away, he who the lies. He won't return to trou Come back, the ferry is ready on y every morning at daybreak."

The General sank back into t and Grisha rocked backward and expressing in broken tones his gr at the loss of Nadja.

The old man tried to comfort hi gave no heed.

"If Panitch comes back she And then with sudden fiercenes Panitch if ever you see him again sands wait for him too."

The light was spluttering lo socket when the General slowly r his chair, carrying she icon and t of ordeal.

"A quiet night, Grisha," said the gently.

He opened the cottage door a out into the night, and with fe slow steps walked up through t moonlight village, and on to his o dark house. An utterly lonely an a helpless and forsaken, man.

(To be continued.)

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...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

NADJA BENT OVER HER FRIEND AND KISSED HER.

CHAPTER XV.

A Friend in Need.

NOTHING could have been more welcome to the desolate, friendless Nadja, than the kindly, almost affectionate greeting of the lady who spoke to her in the cathedral. As they sat together under the elm, Nadja nestled close to her new friend. They were alone there, and the stranger lifted her veil. The features uncovered were those of the Countess Olga Nirotska. Looking steadfastly at her Nadja thought she had never seen so beautiful a lady.

Slavo she had seen women who were peasants—the wives of officials passing though; she had also had a glimpse now and again of ladies in the steamers that ply sometimes on the river, but it was only since her arrival in Kief that she found herself near enough to one to speak to her, and during her afternoon's wanderings she had wished once or twice to speak to ladies who looked kindly on her fair open face. Perhaps they could tell her where she could live and where to seek for work. And here was one of the Kief ladies, who had not waited to be spoken to, and was speaking words of melting kindness to her, offering help and calling her sister. Nadja looked rather again for confidence and support, and got them.

"Don't be afraid, child"—the Countess was only two years her senior, but she was a woman of the world, and Nadja a simple peasant girl. "Don't be frightened. Speak to me. I do wish to help you."

Nadja was not frightened, perplexed and ashamed, perhaps, but not frightened.

"You are not a pilgrim, I think," the Countess continued, seeing her hesitancy, "at least if you are you must be from some village in this province. You are dressed just like some of my own village girls. What is your name?"

"Nadyejda."

"Ah, that's a good name, and I trust there are no more troubles to worry you. Cheer up, dear. Where do you live?"

"I live nowhere. I came to Kief this morning with some pilgrims whom I overtook on the road, and we are all staying together over there." She pointed in the direction of the hospice.

"Do your father or mother know you are here?"

"They are dead," said Nadja, her eyes filling with tears.

"And will you return home with the pilgrims?"

"Oh no, no, I cannot, you know I cannot. I will stop here. I must stay here; I have no home."

"Well, don't cry, sister, don't cry." For a moment or two the Countess sat thoughtfully regarding the girl, and at last a great pity filled her heart. "You shall go home with me, Nadyejda. I have a house here. I won't bother you with more questions. You need not tell me anything unless you like. Let us go together to the hospice, where your friends are staying, and I'll tell them that you are going to stay with me, and that they are not to be uneasy."

Nadji seized the beautiful hand that rested on her knee, and kissed it in a tumult of emotion and gratitude. She did not know who her benefactor was, she only felt she was good. She felt as though she were going home: as though this lovely, dark-eyed lady had been sent by God to help and rescue her.

"I'll come. You are very kind to me. Thank God!" was all she muttered.

Together they left the grassy space with trees, and went out under the campanile and across the dusty square. They made their way through the city to where the pilgrims' lodgings were, and Nadja pointed out the rooms occupied by old Makari's people. It was Makari himself who came to see the Countess. They had all been wondering, he said, what had become of the girl, and feared she had lost her way. Yes, he was glad she had found a friend who promised to be good to her. She was a lonely girl, said old Makari, and a beautiful one, too, he added, with a smile to the other pilgrims who were listening. "I told her she was a grand duchess in disguise. Don't be angry, little soul, and give me your hand, and don't forget the pilgrims.

Nadja embraced the women who had been so kind to her, kissing them on both cheeks, imploring them to remember her always. The Countess, who took to the pilgrims at once, shook them all by the hand, and Nadja, touched to the heart, and utterly heedless, flung her arms round her new friend's neck and wildly kissed her, too.

These two women, alike in their strong emotions, and alike in their capacity for sacrifice, felt powerfully drawn to one another. The Countess took the unprotected peasant girl home with her, and told her household that Nadja was to be her maid, and that they must all be kind to her.

Nadja often enough longed to tell her everything, and this she might have done had she not speedily discovered that the Countess was a near neighbor to Slavo, as neighborhoods go in Russia. To a stranger, ignorant of Slavo, she would have been perhaps in time more open; to one who, notwithstanding the complete affection she showed her, was presumably not ignorant of her home, and certainly knew the Alekhins, she dreaded to tell her story.

Nor did Nadja of course know everything that the Countess could tell. She only knew that her mistress had arrived in Kief from Krasnaya Balka a day or two before her, that she had only been a very few days in the country, and that previously she had lived in St. Petersburg. If there was anything else to know it was told to Nadja one morning when she was dressing her mistress.

"I could not stay cooped up in the country. I thought I could. I thought I could devote my whole life to my people, and perhaps after the war I will."

The Countess paused for a moment, and Nadja saw that her face was very thoughtful and that a strange light of tenderness and love was in her eyes.

"Perhaps after the war," she repeated, "I'll live in Krasnaya Balka for good. But nearly all the friends I knew in St. Petersburg are going to the front; at least my best friends are—those I care for most, and I felt compelled, Nadja, to be somewhere where I could hear about them and pray for them."

She held up her face, and Nadja stooped and kissed her, stroking her hair.

"Have you any friends at the war, Nadja?"

Nadja, although now with more command of herself, blushed a fiery red and said she had.

"And don't you pray for them?"

"Yes, I pray for them."

"Nadja," said the Countess softly, "do you love him very much?"

The whispered "Yes," only Nadja herself heard, but the Countess saw her lips move.

On another occasion, a month or so after their arrival in Kief, Nadja and her mistress were sitting together under the shady trees of St. Sophia's. Nadja's thoughts had gone back to her first visit to the old cathedral, and all the vivid impressions that had been crowded in on her soul seemed to return now, some strangely blunted or blurred, some as clear and keen as at first. What were those words under the stooping, world-worn monks? Ah, that had never been absent from her mind, that tender invitation. She turned to the Countess and told her, and together they entered the cathedral.

"Come unto me," read the countess, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

They sat there on the stone seat, and the message sank deep into both their souls, and gave them rest and courage. It was the Countess who first broke a silence that had been filled with celestial messages to their hearts.

"Nadja," she whispered, and her great dark eyes were solemn and clear, "I believe we have both 'come.' We are at his feet, dear. Your burden is heavier than mine. He will give you rest—the Christ, Nadja. Has he not said that the great gates of heaven shall be open for those who have wept upon earth? 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' 'Blessed are they that mourn.' Shall we not trust him?"

Nadja said nothing, but her heart with its heavy burdens was lightening, and there was already in her soul the spring and the rebound of one that had begun to hope. The dawn of a new life was breaking upon her. But she said nothing. She could not say anything.

"Nadja," whispered her friend, "have you ever heard of people they call Stundists? My overseer is one, and there are a few in Krasnaya Balka. Do you know what they say? They say that only he saves us—that all our pilgrimages are vain—and that all our prayers before all these icons, all our crossings, all our kissing the holy relics, is idolatry. The overseer—he is a German—told me the other day that the New Testament contains what God expects us to do, and that if we go beyond that, or fall short of it, it is wrong. Sometimes, Nadja, I half think they are right. They are certainly not wrong. Have you Stundists in your village also?"

"Yes," answered Nadja hesitatingly. "And they are very good people; but I know very little about them. Father did not like them."

"One of the best men I ever knew was one of their preachers; a young man. The day I left Krasnaya Balka I heard he had gone away to the war with a dear friend of mine, Nadja. I wish you knew him. He lives in Slavo, not far from me."

The Countess noticed the deathly pallor of the girl's face and her silence, but Nadja had been far from strong lately, and she feared to distress her with further questions. Drawing her tenderly towards her, they slowly left the church together.

When the summer began, Olga and Nadja removed from the hot city to a quiet place among the pine woods. Some months passed, and let us hasten over them. They were sad months of illness, and care, and anxiety. The high-born lady served the lowly peasant's daughter with an ineffable tenderness and devotion. Through Nadja's dark hours of fever she was by her side, rendering more than a sister's love, and when the crisis was passed and the hitherto ebbing tide of life turned to a slow and uncertain flow, her soul filled to overflowing with ever-recurring waves of gratitude to God, and purest human happiness. Through the long evenings of the late summer they sat together in their little cottage with the windows open towards the western pine forests and the radiant sky, and while Nadja lay back in her shawls and breathed the ordorous air Olga sat by, and read simple and beautiful things that drew the girl from her reveries of the past, and helped to fix her mind more on the present and on the interests and duties of the future.

Some strange words of terrible meaning to the Countess had been uttered wildly by the sick girl during the paroxysms of her fever. Was it the mere, meaningless frenzy of delirium, or what could it mean? Slavo—she spoke the name of the village quite distinctly. Who was this Vladimir who had forsaken her so cruelly? Who was this Mikhail with the New Testament? And she had raved of the ferry and of the river, and of some one called Grisha. Oh, it was too horrible, and she could not believe it. It was some other Vladimir. It was a common enough name.

And so when Nadja was stronger, and the color slowly returning to her cheeks, and they could go out together in the woods to gather autumn berries and the crimsoning leaves of maple and wild-vine, the Countess told her of her delirious words and asked for her confidence. Nadja humbly asked forgiveness for having kept anything a secret from one who had been both sister and angel to her.

It was down in a ferny hollow with russet oaks around them that these two women got to know one another's heart; each, as she knew her own knew the heart of the other, its hopes, fears, joys, sorrows. It was as though some galling burden had been lifted off Nadja's heart, and she found herself for the first time looking steadfastly and fearlessly at her friend, her sister, as she had learned to call her, mistress no longer.

When the Countess felt that Nadja was gaining in strength she used to talk to her often of the army at the front. She had the newspapers regularly sent up to her from Kief, and the two women used to follow the varying fortunes of the troops all through the hopes, the overthrows, the fluctuations of that critical summer. Olga told her friend about the crossing of the great river, and how the division to which the Alekhins were attached had distinguished itself. She told her about the gallant hero-general in the Balkans, and the women's hearts were now roused by the glory of the cause, and the deeds of bravery that were done, now melting for the sick and tired, when they thought of the pain of the men's wounds and the weariness of their marching. As time went on, and they heard of Gourko's retreat into the Shipka Pass, and of the desperate fighting that followed, of reverse after reverse following the Russian arms, their hearts sank within them.

One evening, early in September, the Countess with pale face read to Nadja some reports from the seat of war sent her by a friend in Kief. Soon it was the suffering wounded they were thinking of, the villages and field-hospitals crammed with them, the streams of them all bleeding, and badly-bandaged, and wretched, wending their painful way along the rough roads, jolting in the springless wagons, the badly wounded lying mostly where they fell until the Bashi Bazouks came. When they heard that the Medical Service had so terrible a strain upon it, that it was in places completely disorganized, that there were no nurses in the right places, the same idea seemed to strike them both at once.

"We must go to the front; it is our duty. We must no longer idle here."

Those last days in Kief were full of the bustle of preparation. Countess Olga with her powerful friends easily arranged all preliminaries. Nadja was eager, and hopeful.

"Ah," said the Countess, the night before they left, "I used to long for high tasks, because I could not recognize the height of those ready at hand. My nearest and plainest duties seemed not heroic enough.

Nadja partly understood what she meant.

It was a beautiful evening late in autumn when the two nurses in their dark brown dresses, with the great red cross fastened on their breasts, found themselves on the railway platform departing for Bulgaria. There was bustle and excitement all around—anxious officials in uniforms, officers, surgeons, nurses, all bound for the South; there was weeping and wringing of hands. A croud of her acquaintances had come to wish the Countess and her friend Godspeed. They were all shaking hands for the last time when an old monk who had hung back on the outskirts of the crowd came forward and lifted his hands. All the men present uncovered, the women clasped their hands.

"May the dear Christ," he solemnly said, "whose servants ye are, guide you and shield you from danger, and bring you back rich in the riches of his divine grace. Amen and Amen."

It was the old Sacristan of St. Sophia's.

(To be continued.)

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...NADJA:...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

THE GENERAL INQUIRES ABOUT THE STUNDISTS.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Letter from Mikhail.

ON that side of Slavo farthest from the river, the side, namely, where most of the Stundists lived, the steppe rolls away in gentle undulations to the East until its monotonous expanse seems ended by a long low ridge topped with a thin fringe of pines that look blue and shadowy when seen from the high ground of the village. Outside the General's grounds these were the only trees in all the country-side, and although they were sparse and only poorly developed, the peasants dignified them by the name of forest, and peopled them of course with evil-minded elves and other uncanny beings that haunt trees and do hurt to the mortal wights who are unfortunate enough to disturb their nocturnal gambolings. The grandmothers of Slavo have a story, with numerous variants of course, of a man who was in the forest once upon a time cutting firewood. Night came on before he could get clear of the trees, and great troops of dancing things, half human and half goat, suddenly appeared and capered around him in mad dances and then pinched him to death with their horny fingers. Even among the more incredulous youth of the village there were found some who when the wind blew from the woods declared they heard weird sounds of strange revelry, songs sung by no mortal voices, sometimes sounding like the songs in a mad saturnalia, sometimes like a dirge sung by monks.

The Stundists, driven from Mikhail's house by the watchful and ubiquitous *uriadnik* used to worship in their hollow in the steppe, and on that meeting-place proving insecure, in sequestered spots among the reeds by the river, and had finally decided to take to the forest. They could think of no safer place. The superstitions about the elves and satyrs they laughed at. The story about the man pinched to death was very terrible, but they did not believe it in this form. But those sounds of songs which the sharp-eared youths had heard they could perhaps explain, and when they heard of them they were careful ever after to modulate their voices when they sang hymns with the wind blowing over to Slavo.

Ever since the departure of their young preacher, and that was more than six months, the Stundists had had a miserable time of it. Not that their experiences previously had been of the pleasantest, but they had been just bearable; and now, as poor Vassily Pavlitch wrote to Mikhail, they led a dog's life, the life a dog leads without his master, he wrote in compliment to the absent Mikhail.

The General had been distinguishing himself as an inquisitor. He had no very clear ideas of Stundism. All he knew was that the priest said it was a pestilent heresy, dangerous alike to church and state, and that unless the fatherland was freed from its pernicious influence, religion and all that Russia held most dear must inevitably perish. He knew no other way towards peace of conscience than zeal for his own narrow views of truth. The *uriadnik*, and the village pope were now his constant councillors, and the staple of their deliberations was the Stundists and how to crush them. To his credit it must be said that at first the General was for milder measures. For instance, he suggested to the priest that he should meet three or four of the leaders of the heretics at his house and discuss with them the points of difference between orthodoxy and Stundism, but the priest, knowing his own imperfections in dialectics and the strength of the Stundists in holy living and in a deep knowledge of the Scriptures, fought shy of the proposed meeting. It was then the turn of the three worthies we have mentioned, the principle authorities of the village, to make suggestions. They made suggestions and the General assisted in carrying them out.

Two of the Stundist leaders, both of them young men with families, were selected by the priest for punishment. The bishop of the diocese was communicated with, and a monastery near Moscow was chosen, to which they were sent for discipline. But in the short space of two months the archimandrite in charge of the monastery wrote to the priests that the two Stundists, instead of doing penance and attending the numerous services, occupied themselves in endless disputations with the monks, and that the simple brotherhood, hearing their arguments for the first time, felt inclined to admit their validity.

"I had to instruct my own monks in orthodoxy," he wrote. "The monks are all set by the ears, and unless you take your Stundists away we shall have heresy within our very walls, and what then?"

So the Stundists were removed, and the priest's plan of discipline voted a failure.

Then it was the *uriadnik's* chance. He obtained the General's consent to invite some twenty of the Stundists to his house, in order, ostensibly, to arrange with them some details of police administration. As soon as all were assembled five or six of his friends who had been collected together for the purpose, rushed into the room with blackened faces and beat the miserable Stundists so unmercifully that blood flowed and bones were broken. Three Stundists who tried to escape were bound with cords, imprisoned in a damp cellar for a week, and half starved with a miserable pittance of black bread and water. But as time went on it was soon seen that even these most drastic of measures had no effect, and the *starshina* was invited to devise a plan for taming men who showed so stubborn a love for the faith that was in them.

Now the *starshina*, or elder, is a person of great authority and consequence in Russian villages. If a man of any leading he practically rules the village assembly, and the orthodox peasants of Slavo, still a large majority of the village, were only too willing to let him rule. It saved them trouble and worry. The *starshina's* plan to plague the Stundists saved them trouble, and they speedily agreed to it. In connection with every village there is a great deal of what is known as communal work, the performance of which benefits the whole commune—draining the common land, erecting fences, regulating the water supply, watching the village at night, and so on. The peasants are drafted to this work in groups, and the group which works at communal labor to-day, for instance, may not be called on again for the next three months. The *starshina* suggested that as the Stundists were said to be fond of going out at night to their meetings, they would be more usefully employed as night watchmen. The villagers agreed to relieving themselves entirely of this obnoxious duty and transferring it to the Stundists. Next the *starshina* suggested that as these obstinate heretics were almost all well-to-do people they could afford time for the communal labor much better than their poorer neighbors. Also agreed to unanimously. All the communal labor, therefore, was imposed on them. In July when the orthodox were reaping their grain the Stundists were hedging and ditching for the village, and when their communal work was finished the rain had destroyed their harvest. They murmured and grumbled of course, but they were in a minority; they had no redress, and the *starshina* threatened that if they showed any opposition he would liberally assess the value of the labor and confiscate their goods to that amount. One man with temerity enough to speak of petitioning the Governor of Kief had his head broken. Another for having offered to prepare the petition was ducked in the river.

It was a grim satire that while these cruel oppressions were taking place in Russia, the Russian army was fighting to deliver the Bulgarians from the oppression of the Turkish Sultan. The sufferings of the Christians in Turkey, and the fact that they could not worship God according to their conscience distressed the Czar, while he was utterly indifferent to the sufferings of his own Stundist subjects and was not at all troubled about their not being able to worship God according to their conscience. But then there was nothing to be gained by protecting Stundists, while by freeing the Bulgarians a step was gained on the way to Constantinople.

Toward the close of autumn—it was a beautiful Saturday afternoon in November, the little Stundist community was in a state of extreme agitation at some news that had been secretly carried round from one to the other of them. It was great news: Vassily Pavlitch had received a letter from Mikhail. They were invited to a service in the forest, and before the service began the letter was to be read. It was their first meeting for a month. The time appointed was two hours after sunset. It was nearly seven months since the spring evening when they had watched the departing carriage bearing Mikhail away to Kief, and they had often wondered what had happened that he had not written. His welfare had been the theme of many an earnest prayer.

More than fifty of them, men mostly, made their way secretly and silently, no two of them together, across to the low ridge where the pines grew. The night was cold, but their hearts burned within them, for were they not going to worship God in common, and to hear the news, the rumor went that it was good news about their beloved Mikhail? Wrapped in their sheep-skins they assembled in a little hollow among the trees and lighted two or three rough lanterns. Vassily Pavlitch stood before them the letter in his hands.

"Brethren," said Vassily, "I think we are all here." The good man was puffed up with his importance on this special occasion. "Now sit down, and I will read you Misha's letter." He opened the paper and read as follows:

"*Dear Brother in the Lord Jesus, Vassily:*—"Peace to you and all the brothers and sisters in Slavo. How my heart longs for Slavo! Read this letter first to my dear mother, and then to the brethren, and, when they have heard it, let it go to the other villages where the brethren know me. I have little time to write, and we may be called any minute; but Panitch Sergei is writing and he told me I might also write. We are both well, thank God. O Vassily, we have had awful things to go through ever since the beginning of July! We were then encamped near the Lom River, and what I saw I will never forget. There is a little village there called Kasilevo, and we had to leave it to go out and watch some Turks. We left about a hundred Bulgarians in the village—old men, women and children. When we were away the Bashi Bazouks came, and the people must have run into the church for shelter. When we came back they had all been murdered. Panitch Sergei and I went into the church at night with some others to see if any one still lived, and there they were all drenched in blood, lying over the floor. Panitch's face was rible to look at.

"Since then we have been ordered o Plevna. Here it is also frightful, ev day more horrible than the day before. few nights ago the Turkish shells w just screaming over us, and where I as soon as the firing slackened a bi could hear the air full of the groans of wounded below in the hollow, and and then a yell of agony when the pr ing Turks would murder a wounded n Next morning we had to cross the gro where the fighing had been, and, as I lowed in the rear of Panitch's troop, I the faces of the wounded men still l by scores all along the road. We c not ride fast as we feared to tread on bodies, and some poor fellows, woun slightly, had fallen asleep right across dusty road and never wakened as we past them. No one knows how miser we felt at leaving them there, for we k that the Bashi Bazouks were comin behind us and would butcher ther their helplessness.

"We are just in from a long ride of days. We met swarms of flying Bu ians from the villages. They were co ing and shaking with terror. We one crowd of them of about a hun chiefly women and babies, and when itch halted and spoke to them they b crying and said they were starving. close behind and heard every word. easily understand what the people say. So Panitch ordered the troop to 'My brave fellows,' he sang out, 'w help?' He told me to hand out al bread. I did the same with mine, a did every man of the troop. I saw fellows fish odd coppers out of their ets, which they had been hoarding to tobacco, every copeck they possess believe, and we handed all over t Bulgarians, who just looked like skele Some of our fellows joked roughly wit women, but I know if they had not they would have wept. Their meant a tear and a blessing. But w we just starving ourselves when w back to camp after fasting thirty hou

"Panitch has only given me a very piece of paper. You'll be glad that w hundreds of chances to say a G word, and how glad every one is to it! Panitch bought ten New Testa when we were in Galatz from a man called a colporteur, and gave them t worst men in his troop. When we c have glorious meetings. Panitch sometimes. All the men very worship him. I must finish now. If only had more paper! Brother, t brethren to be faithful. I long to be among you to hear your voices an your dear faces again. Pray for us.

MIKHAIL KULMENK

"Now, brethren, that's the We'll talk about it afterwards. W glad to hear that Misha and Panit well. We'll sing now. Suppose w Misha's hymn beginning, 'Lord Strength, on Thee we rest?'"

"But what about the wind?" timid voice from the darkness. "It right over homeward."

"Oh, never mind the wind," sai sily Pavlitch smiling, "they will thi the fairies."

(To be continued.)

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...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

AN ORDER FROM THE GENERAL IN COMMAND.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Plitchenti Defile.

THAT was a frightful winter in the Balkans. The Russian soldiers, inured as they were to the severity of their own rude northern climate, were unable to withstand the horrors of those terrible weeks. It had been cold enough in the plains south of the Danube, but as they ascended the elevated plateau and difficult passes of the mountains, the weather became worse and ever worse, and the troops fell ready victims to its inclemency.

The most shocking negligence and bad management had been displayed by the commissariat department, and until the present day, it remains an unsolved question whether or not the shortness of supplies of food and clothing was the outcome of criminal and cruel greed and corruption, or merely one of the many unhappy accidents which dogged the fortunes of the Russian arms. When the cold weather began, the famished troops were assured that in a few days unlimited supplies of sheepskins would be on their way to the Bulgarian armies. Week followed week, and only a few of these indispensable garments filtered into camp. Were they ever purchased at all? Who knows. Did they ever leave Russia? If they did, who stole them? It will never be known. Enormous sums went in the purchase of bread. It was supposed that meal and flour were bought in quantities more than sufficient for the wants of the army. But in midwinter, nevertheless, the gallant troops starved on mouldy and gritty rubbish that often crawled with maggots, while Jew and Christian alike, the scoundrelly middlemen and contractors, some of them high in favor, men of unblemished character, amassed colossal fortunes. There was no murmuring among the brave fellows who were suffering. They died by the hundred and the thousand from exposure to the piercing frosts, again by hundreds and thousands from dysentery, the result of bad and insufficient food. The want of warm clothing, and the sandy rye bread, did more damage to the Russian army during many a week of that awful winter than the skill and bravery of the Turks. It was not until the following spring when the deep snows had melted off the mountains that the full horror of the winter —that awful winter that had been passed was realized.

But, however, much of attraction and interest there may be for us in following the fate and fortunes of the great army as it blindly, but bravely, stumbled through the deep snows of the Balkans, every day with its record of patient endurance and noble heroism rarely paralleled in the annals of armies, we must not forget that we are immediately concerned with the fortunes of those few individuals who have already passed across our stage, with the two young soldiers whom last we saw in the fading light of a peaceful spring evening, speeding to their places at the front, with the young soldier servant who accompanied them seeking distraction from his great sorrow.

Sergei Alekhin had been placed in charge of one outlying detachment, and it was owing to his constant and sleepless vigilance that the gorge had remained hitherto unattacked, and that the place became stronger every day that passed. It was a cruel position in which to place these devoted men, but mercy is a secondary consideration in the exigencies of even the most civilized warfare. The little camp lay on a knoll in the centre of the defile between two mural precipices, and exposed to the full force of the hurricanes that shrieked down it from the northern snows. Snow lay deep all around, on every ledge and jut and spot flat enough to bear it. Behind the camp was piled up a scanty supply of firewood not sufficient for two nights proper firing, but which was nevertheless, the remaining half of a months' supply. The water the soldiers drank was obtained by melting snow. They had a little tea still left, no sugar, a little tobacco, and a somewhat stinted supply of the hard greenish substance which the Jew contractor called bread. For the one hundred and fifty soldiers, there were exactly twenty-four sheepskins. Some of the men managed to lead a half-frozen existence in the single summer tents, now tattered and torn with hard usage, others burrowed holes for themselves in the snow, snow-palaces the poor fellows jocularly called them. They built snow sheds for the few wretched horses still alive, and fed them with insufficient rations of chopped straw and those fragments of the green compound which human throats could not swallow.

One hundred and twenty of the men had been badly frost-bitten on toes, and hands, and faces. Over one hundred continued to groan night and day with rheumatism in one or other of its forms. All day and all night long there was a perpetual coughing, and spitting, and rubbing of numbed limbs and stiffening joints with snow. The thermometer had stood for a fortnight at thirty-five degrees below zero, and a terrific gale continued to blow from the north without cessation. Once or twice a day, but only for a few minutes at a time, the sun struggled forth from the hurtling clouds that swept over the mountains, but there was no warmth in its sickly rays. The air was perpetually filled with fine drifting snow that struck sharp as a knife against the face. Such was the camp in the defile of Plitchenti.

It was here with the tremendous strain which they had to bear that the hitherto loosely knit warp and woof of Sergei's sentiments and ideas hardened into the compacted closeness of character. His loneliness and remoteness threw him in on himself, not only in his conduct of the grave responsibilities that rested upon him in the defence of the pass, and the unremitting attention which the physical attention of his men demanded, but also in the performance of a duty which he was fast learning to place beyond all others in urgency and importance, the spiritual growth of his own nature and of those over whom he exercised influence and authority. With the fluctuations and struggles of those terrible months in the Balkans, there went the continuous inner spiritual trial and struggle which he passed through, annealing his mind and spirit to their highest temper, and giving reality and force to his ideas. The great truths which Mikhail had taught him were filtering down into his soul after long and quiet contemplation. Face to face with the dread scenes of war, realizing as he had never realized before the uncertainties of life, he grew humble and pure, and never one tyrannical, or morose, or hopeless word escaped him. Mikhail, we know, had written to his friend Vassily, that Sergei's troopers adored him. It was quite true, and now amidst the terrors of their critical position, with hourly evidences of his devotion and self-sacrifice before them, of his never-failing good temper and comradeship, as well as his plentitude of resource, their devotion to him grew to have no bounds.

Next to Sergei, by far the most important member of the little company was Mikhail. Poor fellow, he had had a miserable time of it. No sooner did the extreme cold weather commence than he began to be racked with rheumatism. When he recovered a little, it was only to fall a victim to typhus. Sergei, and every man of the detachment who was not himself ill, was devoted to the poor preacher. The best skill of the field apothecary, a gallant young German from a pleasant colony in Kherson, who died in battle on the Maritza horribly wounded, and whose dying breath was a prayer for the Czar and his armies, was exerted on his behalf. Great rough fellows used to relieve one another noiselessly at his lowly bedside, and sit beside him with his hot hand in theirs, watching his glazed eyes for returning consciousness.

They all loved Mikhail with a love second only to that for which they felt for their commander. Each individual of them had come into close contact with the gentle and godly peasant of Slavo, and had heard from him the great message and the tender invitation. In the paroxysms of his fever the little hut would be filled by the rough northern dragoons in their long grey tattered overcoats, weeping like children. The camp gave up firing for a whole week that Mikhail's hut might be warm, and his bed was made softer by coats that their owners could ill spare. How they banked up the snow round the hut to keep out the icy draughts! For many a year after, Mikhail used to tell with a tear and a smile the story of how one of them knocked over a frozen bustard in the snow, and how it was roasted and boiled and made soup of, and again roasted and boiled, for his exclusive use.

A considerable spell of fine clear weather a little after Christmas, had improved matters somewhat in the Plitchenti gorge. The sun shone pleasantly on the snow around them, and the peaks of the mountains at the head of the defile glistened in the strong light. The road between the little outlying camp and the main body in the Shipka, thirty miles away, was open, and communication between the two had again become possible. The hard frost that still prevailed was the only serious drawback that the brave fellows in the gorge felt to perfect contentedness.

Early one morning they were all out of doors engaged in rough games that only the extreme cold made possible, when a sentry cried out that two mounted men were slowly making their way down the pass from the Shipka. At once every one was alert. These were the first messengers from headquarters for a fortnig Anything might happen now. There wo be dispatches to Captain Sergei, the r thought, and some move was expe that must surely vary the monotony their existence.

They were right. There was to b more monotony.

Down came the riders plunging thro the snow. Sergei stood forward to rec them. They were bearers of two lett one of them for Mikhail from Slavo, dressed under cover to Sergei, the oth dispatch from the general in comm Sergei tore off the envelope and ra read through his orders. Mikhail ret ed to his hut to pore over a long epist detail from his old friend Vassily. In a minutes he was joined by Sergei loo pale and thoughtful. The troopers st ing around Mikhail watching him rea letter, smiling when he smiled, loo serious when Mikhail's face showed some important matter was being per shuffled awkwardly out of the h the entrance of their officer, tum over one another at the door. They that the captain and Mikhail came the same Ukraine village, and the stinctively felt that they wished alone over that letter.

"Let me have the news, Misha. is Vassily? How are they all?"

Mikhail handed him the letter, and gei hastily skimmed its closely-p pages looking for something, for a that he felt must be mentioned in it where. He found it at last. Vassily's ran thus: "The German overseer Krasnaya Balka was over here the day. He says the Countess left her soon after war was declared, and that not seen her since. He knows this beca heard sometimes when she wanted matters attended to. He was in Kief autumn, and they told him that Olg lovna had gone away to Bulgaria as pital nurse, taking with her a youn to whom she seemed much attache who had been living with her for months."

Sergei read these few words aga again, and his heart filled with the est, most conflicting emotions—infini for the noble woman who had devot self to assuage the pain and mis the helpless wounded, and fea the frail woman, nurtured in refin would break down under the self-i strain, would herself incur one of th ble plagues of disease that scourg army worse than the bayonets and of the Turks.

He handed the letter back to M without reading any more of it. the narrative of events at Slavo th hail now began to pour forth fell heeding ears. Sergei heard about appearance of the Sozontieffs—to most inexplicable news—about th and worries that the Stundists s about Grisha being often up at th and the General's almost constan panion, about all the little details village life; but his thoughts dwel on the true woman whom he lov everything else passed by him un He rose and went to his own tent Mikhail that next day he would long talk with him, and that the re troopers would take back any lett he might wish to write. That lo however, they never had.

Once in his tent Sergei became t of action. The dispatch from the commanding was pulled out of his and a map of the district was unr his little camp table and closely Again he read the dispatch. It wa concise, peremptory—"To Captai hin in charge of the detachment in chenti Pass.—Intelligence is just in Wednesday morning before day body of the enemy's irregular cav endeavor to push up one of the either east or west of you. Keep look-out, and should you hear or thing of importance send your fast senger with the news. Should tempt Plitchenti hold the place to The enemy are three hundred stro inforcements will reach you We midday."

"This will be a tough job," Sergei as he turned over the situ his mind. "They will of cours force their way up the Plitchenti." his voice, "Send Sergeant Borisoff

(To be Continued.)

*Published by arrangement with Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, Chicago, and Toronto.

...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

"MIKHAIL AND NADJA LOOKED PITYINGLY ON AS THE SURGEON EXAMINED HIM."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Crescent and the Cross.

SERGEANT BORISOFF was Sergei's right-hand man in military matters, a tough old veteran who had seen twenty years of arduous service in all parts of the Czar's dominions. In he came through the tent door with his hand at the salute, his tattered overcoat bound round with an improvised red belt, from which hung his long cavalry sabre.

"At your service, Highborn."

"The Bashi Bazouks are coming up one of the gorges Wednesday morning at daybreak. We must'nt let them up the Plitchenti. The general says we are to stay here at any cost. Do you understand?"

"I understand, Highborn."

He at once ordered a parade. As Sergei went along the lines examining each man carefully he could not help smiling occasionally at the ludicrous array of rags and bones before him, at the gay faces worn by misery and wretchedness, at the sorry force from which such brave things were expected at daybreak on Wednesday. He called attention and they drew themselves up stiffly.

"Now, brave lads," he began, "Attention! We have all day to-day and to-morrow to prepare for one of the stiffest fights we ever had. Three hundred Bashi Bazouks are to attempt this pass on Wednesday morning at daybreak. They have been scouring about among the villages there below us, slaughtering and pillaging and worse. Shall we run away and let them come on?"

A thunderous "No" from every man present greeted Sergei's question. The troopers grasped their sabres and the infantry swung their rifles high in the air.

"God bless you, boys! To your tents. Get everything ready. Parade at daybreak to-morrow."

"God bless you, Highborn!"

It was late on Tuesday afternoon that one of the scouts came breathlessly running in with the news that a considerable body of Turkish irregular horse was slowly making its way across the plain towards the mountains.

In a moment the little camp was in a state of wild excitement. Sergei carefully studied the position of affairs and decided to withdraw his men from the forepost and concentrate all his strength to guard the narrower part of the defile where his principal force lay. Sentries were posted across the valley just below the camp.

The day had been warm and by no means clear. Towards evening snow began to come down in great slow-falling flakes. At eight o'clock Sergei ordered prayers. The side flaps of his tent were drawn up and every available man of the little garrison was either inside the dimly-lighted tent, squatting near where Mikhail stood with his open book, or else outside in the dark, with the snow settling down on their gray great-coats. As Sergei entered every man stood up. Mikhail began the service. The great gaunt fellows bowed their heads in holy reverence. The wonderful words read with Mikhail's low, sweet voice went straight to their hearts.

"Now," said Mikhail, "we will stand silent for a few minutes, and each of us will present to the Almighty all that he has on his heart."

They stood there in the dark in the falling snow, silent and awe-stricken. "All well," came from a rock high above them, and was faintly answered and still more faintly re-answered. Sergei took Mikhail's place. All heads were bent. A few men were ou their knees in the snow.

"Our Father, which art in heaven," began the young officer.

"Our Father, which art in heaven," came in soft, hoarse response from the brave fellows who were to meet death on the morrow.

Sergei solemnly recited the whole prayer.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," said Sergei bravely.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever," answered the men with quivering voices.

"Amen," whispered Sergei.

"Amen," came the response, so soft and low as hardly to be heard.

"Brothers, good-bye until three. God give you a good sleep. Parade at three."

They slowly dispersed. But there was no sleep that night.

At three the bugle sounded. The snow was still falling, but the wind was now again tearing down the defile in short, sharp gusts, blowing the snow about in clouds. The men tumbled out of their tents and quickly and silently took up the positions assigned them. They were all blithe, alert, sanguine.

Perfect order reigned among Sergei's little company of devoted fellows. Those stationed on the western slope of the defile began to notice the higher rocks above them touched with the first faint gray light of dawn. The Russians could just discern through the driving mist and snow the moving forms of the enemy. They could see a bright sash here and there, and sometimes a swart face glowing under its *bashlik*.

The Turks advanced a few paces further, and sharp and clear rang out the bugle. A rattle of musketry from a hundred rifles was the almost instantaneous reply, followed by a blood-curdling yell, the battle cry of the Bashi Bazouks. The Turks were evidently unprepared for resistance. The Russians had expected three hundred of the enemy—they were over five hundred strong. After three unsuccessful attempts to force the defenders of the pass from their position, the Turks, who had suffered terrible losses, abandoned concerted action and clambered up among the rocks to dislodge the Russians, each man fighting for his own hand. A terrible series of bloody encounters now began. Outnumbered in the proportion of three to one, Sergei's men began to fall back on the redan. Many a brave fellow of them dropped. The air was filled with the crackle of muskets and the frantic cries of the Bashi Bazouks as they rushed like maniacs on their foes. Slowly, surlily, the Russians retired, gradually hemmed in in front and on both wings. Every inch of the ground they stubbornly contested, their numbers gradually thinning.

"Will the reinforcements never come?" asked Sergei. "Can this last much longer?"

The remnants of his men had now obtained the shelter of the redan. The Turks had drawn off to a distance. Sergei, gravely anxious, lay awaiting their next move. He knew if they carried the mound all would be lost. Suddenly the Turks put themselves again in line of attack and rushed toward the mound.

"Steady, boys!" sang out the brave Sergei, "Steady!"

"God be with you, High-born."

On came the Turks yelling like demons, their eyes flashing with the fierce frenzy of battle.

The mad cries of passion and hate, the crash of blows, the sharp rattle of the rifles, the sickening thud of bayonet stabs, yells of entreaty and agony—it is indescribable.

In the midst of it all again Sergei's voice, strong, jubilant.

"Our brothers are coming down the hill, boys. I hear their bugles. Thank God! Thank God!"

And nearer and nearer loomed the steel-grey coats; the steady bugling became louder and louder. And the Turks, looking up, seeing that their case was hopeless, sprang down the glacis of the redan pell-mell, scoured down the glen to where their horses were picketed, and fled from Plitchenti.

The ragged, bleeding remnant in the redan were crying and laughing with joy, and clasping the hands of their deliverers and kissing them and joining in the choruses of the songs. And their deliverers pointed up the hill to pack-horses bringing sheep-skins and many another luxury.

CHAPTER XIX.

In Hospital.

The Countess and Nadja made a bustling and uncomfortable journey from Kief south to the Roumanian capital. Arrived at the Danube, our two heroines had their first sight of the stern, terrible realities of war. Only three short months before and the Russian armies had crossed the river at Simnitza and other points, full of ardent hope and buoyancy and courage; and now long, slow-moving trains of ambulance wagons were coming back full of mangled and bleeding men and boys, groaning tortured wretches, ruined, wrecked, hopeless.

It was here, with the slow-rolling monotonous Danube, not far away, that Olga and Nadja received their first instruction as Red Cross sisters. More than once they quailed and sickened; but the knowledge that the misery and anguish around them was incalculable, and that their work and presence might help to assuage it, buoyed them up and strengthened them.

As the Russian armies penetrated into Turkish territory, the hospital near the Danube was set apart for convalescents, and the greater part of the field-surgeons and nurses were ordered south to Radova, to the scene of active war. Nadja and Olga, with a score of others, jolted in rough springless carts over the frosty roads of Bulgaria.

At Radova things were worse than on the Danube. The disorder and confusion were appalling. To speak of the sickening discomforts to which Olga and her companion were subjected, would be, perhaps, out of place. They were not seeking comfort. The surgeons here, as almost everywh on the Russian side, performed miracles devoted heroism, many of them pale a emaciated as their patients, from unren ting, grinding toil and want of sleep. that could be done for the brave fello lying wounded, they did.

A long hut, roughly constructed tarred wood, and banked up all rou with snow, was placed under Olg charge. Two or three iron stoves, th pipes venting acrid wood smoke at ev joint, imparted a little warmth to wretched shed. The walls trickled with sweat. Melting snow dropped h and there from the roof, and it seeme matter of indifference whether the drops fell on the beds or on the muc path up the centre of the hut. Such be Boards were in rows on the damp grou and on these were placed coarse str bolsters. The bags of straw were pac so close together that there was bar space for the surgeons and nurses to p between them. Everything was stai and smeared with those terrible dark splashes, and the heavy odor of chlo form, iodoform, and many another dr hung about the place. This was the cers' hospital. Fifty badly-wounded r lay here. Twenty of them were to die

For a month and more, Olga and Na labored in this fœtid shed. It was an ful experience. As each bed became cant it was at once occupied with a fr case. There was no rest, no relief— ways the same unvarying picture of hur agony. But as the cold weather bec intenser, active hostilities diminished, towards Christmas the nurses found t duties a trifle lighter. Their respite, h ever, was only of short duration. A sack came spurring in with orders to h preparations made for the receptisn badly-wounded officer and some n There had been some severe fighting, said, in one of the southern passes.

Next morning two ambulance sle were driven slowly into Radova. T contained Sergei and a score or so of brave troopers.

A livid unconscious form, unkempt, stained with powder, lay stretched on of the lowly pallets; a surgeon with gra pale face bent over it on one side. the other stood Olga, anguish in her hot eyes. At the foot of the bed st Nadja and Mikhail.

"It's very doubtful, sister Olga," the surgeon. "There is however chance, if we can manage to keep t the fever. You had better not have case. His head must be kept cool. understand?"

"Oh, doctor, you'll do your best, w you?" Olga's voice quivered, and clasped hands, once so white and f now stained and rough and red, tremb

"I always do my best," replied the geon gruffly.

"Yes, I know, but he is my fri We knew one another as children. live near one another in the Ukraine."

"Sister, said the surgeon kindly, and rest."

She turned away to her own quart and her nerves gave way at last. T night she was in a high fever, and surgeon sitting by her bed told N. point blank that, in his opinion, it w be a miracle if she ever recovered.

(To be Continued.)

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Catarrh

It is just as surely a disease of the bloo Scrofula. So say the best authori How foolish then to expect a cure snuffs, inhalants, etc. The sensible co is to purify your blood by taking the blood purifier and that is Hood's Sars rilla, This medicine has permane cured many hundreds of cases of Cat It goes to the root of the trouble whi the blood. If you are a sufferer fro tarrh, try Hood's Sarsaparilla at Get only

HOOD'S Sarsaparilla

Is the One True Blood Purifier.

Hood's Pills the after-dinner pill and ly cathartic 25c.

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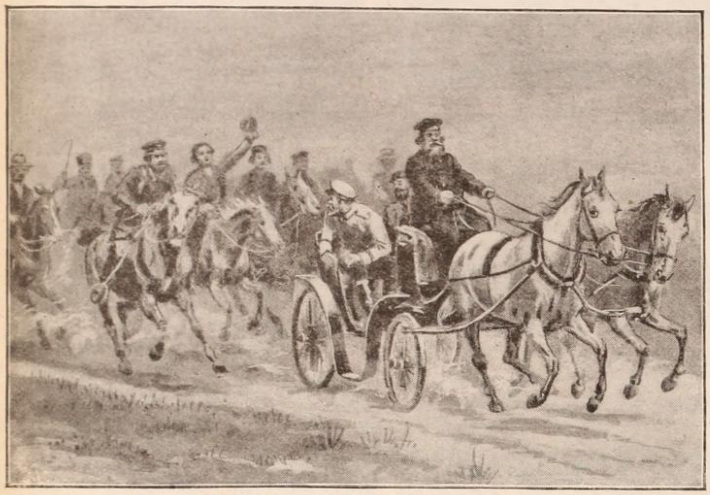

THE RETURN OF SERGEI AND MIKHAIL.

CHAPTER XX.

Convalescence.

WHAT a woeful, anxious winter it was in Radovo! Mikhail watched day and night by the bed of his young *barin*, Nadja with like untiring vigilance nursed the Countess. For many a week it was an unvarying report of two lives slowly ebbing away in the wasting delirium and frenzy of fever. Then followed a day or two of tenser anguish, when hope seemed slowly and surely to leave the watchers, and the surgeon gravely shook his head, and took Nadja's hand to comfort her.

At last the change came. It was an afternoon late in February, the afternoon of a day of glorious sunshine and spring thaw. The surgeon entered the long, low hut where Sergei lay, and as he approached the sick man a feeble hand was stirred to greet him.

"Thank you, doctor. How is she?"

"Who, Sister Olga? Better, my boy. I have just left her. The worst is over. She has just been asking how you are."

Sergei's face shone like the sun's.

Very slowly, but surely, convalescence followed. Sergei grew happy as a king, and as radiant as a boy. Nadja came in three or four times a day to relieve Mikhail, and bearing sweet, coy messages from her friend. Mikhail would be sent across to the nurse's quarters to inquire how the Countess fared. As they grew a little stronger scraps of paper passed between them, and the Countess kept Sergei's scraps under her pillow, and Sergei kept her answers under his.

It was sad news to Sergei when, one afternoon, Nadja came with a note to say that the Countess was now well enough to travel, that she had received orders to proceed to headquarters, and that they were to start that night on their journey southward.

"Good-bye," ended the note. "I shall look forward eagerly to seeing you. Perhaps you will also be ordered south. I believe important movements are shortly expected. But if I do not see you again during the campaign, we shall surely meet at home, at dear Krasnaya Balka, perhaps in the old English garden under the arbor-vitæ. Good-bye, and God bless you."

Sergei's evening was spent in one brown study after another. If her departure saddened him, the words Olga wrote cheered him, and once or twice, as he turned the sentences over and over in his mind, he found himself reading between the lines, and smiling.

It was towards nightfall of the same day that an orderly entered the hospital-hut and stood at the salute beside him.

"Colonel Alekhin?"

"Captain, if you please," said Sergei.

"This letter and packet from the general commanding are addressed to *Colonel* Alekhin."

The orderly handed over the letter and a small package. Sergei's face flushed crimson. He tore open the letter.

"SIR,"—it began—"The Grand Duke desires me to inform you that, in recognition of your splendid valour, and your services and sufferings for the Fatherland, he has much pleasure in appointing you Colonel of the Staff, and in begging your acceptance of the accompanying St. George's Cross. It is the Grand Duke's wish that as soon as you are strong enough, you will return to Russia, in order to regain complete health. As soon as peace is restored, His Imperial Highness hopes that, when you are next in St. Petersburg, he may have the pleasure of becoming personally acquainted with so gallant an officer."

It was quite dark when Mikhail came in to prepare his master for bed. He found him still staring at the letter.

CHAPTER XXI.

Home From the War.

As the war dragged its slow length along, the general occasionally heard from his nephews, from Sergei more often than from Vladimir. Sergei's letters were a short, crisp chronicle of events, just like what one soldier might be expected to write to another. The general, however, took no interest in them. Vladimir's contained little beyond demands for money, covering the whole gamut of request, from whining petition to truculent threat. All the money he could lay his hands on he sent to Vladimir, the proceeds of another mortgage on the estate were sent to him. There was no satisfying him. His losses at cards were continuous and heavy. At his wits' end to supply him, the weak old man, believing that his precious nephew's honor was at stake, was at last obliged to notify his man of business in St. Petersburg to arrange for the sale of Slavo.

"What does it matter?" the general thought, or gradually accustomed himself to think. "When the war is over he'll marry Olga Navrotska and have plenty. I myself don't want much more; my day is over. My pension will be enough for me. But then there is Sergei——"

What provision to make for Sergei puzzled him. It was July now, and Sergei was coming home. He had heard of his magnificent defence of the pass in the Balkans, of his promotion and decoration, and could not but feel a glow of satisfaction at the news; but he wished it had been Vladimir. If it was only Vladimir who was returning on the morrow! was the general's wish on the eve of Sergei's home-coming.

Sergei was speeding over his beloved steppes onward towards Kief, thinking the minutes hours, with his heart welling over with love to the old man at home, building castles in the air with Olga Navrotzka in every stately room of them.

The news that Sergei and Mikhail were coming home sped like wildfire through Slavo. A letter from Mikhail to his mother apprised the villagers that they had been ordered home invalided, but it was only when the general gave orders to have the old travelling carriage sent to Kief to meet them, that they knew when they might be expected. A village meeting was held on the eve of the arrival, and it was resolved to keep the next day as a holiday, and in deference to the well-known views both of Sergei and Mikhail, each one present at the meeting pledged himself to abstain from *vodka* during the entire day. A mixed committee of Orthodox and Stundists was appointed to meet the returning soldiers at a point out on the steppe on the far side of the river, and escort them to their homes. There was a new *Uriadnik*, who had been winning golden opinions of all men, and he was entrusted with the bread and salt of welcome.

Sergei and Mikhail in due course arrived at Kief, and there, outside the railway station, stood the dusty lumbering carriage and the dusty old paunchy, jolly-looking coachman, his face wreathed in smiles. They moved swiftly through the outskirts of the Pilgrim City, and out on to the steppe, through long miles of heavy nodding grain.

The two men lay back in the carriage, basking in the July sun, too happy, too full of pleasant memories and anticipations to trouble one another with remarks or their driver with questions. As they topped one of the long undulations of the steppe, and looked along the white ribbon of road before them they saw a cloud of dust, and could distinguish the figures of horsemen galloping rapidly towards them. In front rode an important looking personage in semi-uniform, and as he approached nearer he was seen to carry something tied up in a red handkerchief. The travellers speedily recognized them, and stood up in the carriage which they had ordered to halt. The horsemen were now around them covered with dust, sweating, their eyes sparkling with pleasure, hurrahing with all their might, and eagerly stretching forward their hands to be shaken. The *Uriadnik* produced a white plate, and on it a piece of black rye bread and some salt. Then the *Uriadnik* marshalled his men behind the carriage, and on went the procession with great noise and jubilation. It was a wonderful home-coming, and every one was happy.

There was just one note of discord, and both Sergei and Mikhail could uot but notice it. It was when the general was mentioned. From letters received months ago Sergei knew that Grisha was staying at the house—he did not know what the villagers knew, he knew nothing of recent events, but felt in some intangible way that there was something of pain or sorrow or shame awaiting at home to be revealed to him, something that made his friends here silent and hang their heads.

Here they were at the ferry, and the whole village was there on the other side dressed in its best, and cheering with all its might. Although the disappearance of old Sozontieff was known to them Nadja had not mentioned, save to the Countess, the circumstances, so far as she knew them, of her father's death, and the new ferryman, and the brightened up *izba* on the other side struck cold and strange on Mikhail.

What a tumult of rejoicing as they landed on the other side! Right in the forefront of the crowd stood Mikhail's old mother, clutching Vassily Pavlitch's arm, trembling with excitement, her wrinkled face lighted up with a beautiful and wonderful look which only mothers' faces take when their sons come home; and the maids of the village had put flowers in her hands, and told her she was to give them to Mikhail. And here was Mikhail, and she ran forward with a little cry, and scattered the wild flowers all over his head and shoulders as he bent to kiss her. And every girl there had flowers in her hair—they had been roaming the steppe all the morning for them, and Sergei was given sweet little bunches of them and scented herbs.

At the top of the hill the road divided. Sergei bade a friendly good-bye to his people and entered his uncle's grounds alone. Mikhail and the crowd turned into the village and moved slowly along to the Uriadnik's house, where an astounding feast had been prepared, almost every woman in the village having contributed to it either in labor or in kind.

Somehow, as Sergei entered the grounds round his uncle's house, the contrast between the pleasant tumult of the last hour and the chill silence here came cruelly home to him. Why did not the general appear? Only the grizzled butler, whom he had known as a child, stood at the front door to meet him, but instead of running forward with lively pleasure to greet his young *barin*, he looked troubled; he stood irresolute there rubbing his hands, seemingly intent on his shoe-buckles.

"Why, Yakov, what's the matter? Are you ill? Shake hands, man."

"Don't go yet, Panitch. I don't think you know what has been happening."

"Where's the general?"

"In his room with Grisha. They are at their prayers, and nobody dare disturb them."

"Yakov, tell me, what is all this about Grisha?"

"O, Panitch, it is terrible. Come into your own room, and I'll tell you all I know."

Sergei, followed by the old man, tramped along the lonely sounding corridors where decay and death had been playing sad havoc during the months of his absence. He reached his little room, sat down and told the butler to speak.

"Well, Panitch, it was late last autumn that Grisha came. He had been here off and on for some time before, but it was then that he came to live here. Panitch, you have not seen him lately. His face has altered greatly, and we notice it still more when he is in a rage or excited."

"What do you mean? Alters? Everybody's face alters under excitement."

"Yes, but not like Grisha's. Panitch, forgive me, but you never saw two faces more alike than Grisha's and the general's. And do you know what Grisha told Marfa!—that he was the general's son? And once the general nearly struck me because I pushed Grisha; and we have to attend on him now—Marfa and I; and he is dressed like a *barin*, and is always with his father—with the General, I mean; and the general speaks of him as Panitch Grisha."

Sergei could only stare at the butler.

"Leave me alone, Yakov, I want to think it all over. I must be by myself a little."

The old servant crept silently out of the room, and Sergei buried his face in his hands. What could he do? It was dusk when he finally made up his mind to go to his uncle. He went along the passage and paused outside the room from which muffled monotonous sounds came, as of some one reading. He knocked. There was no reply. He knocked louder, and still no reply. He opened the door. The atmosphere was thick with incense, but through the dense clouds he saw two figures sitting side by side.

Sergei looked long and fixedly at the strange pair. "It is true," he muttered to himself, "no one can doubt it, what does it mean?"

He bent over the old man—"Uncle, uncle, I am back again; Sergei is here."

The old man opened his eyes and looked up wearily—"Where is Vladimir? O, would see Vladimir before I die!" He closed his eyes again.

Grisha never ceased his gabble; he never recognized his old friend; he was staring straight through the cloud of incense to the glittering thing beyond. Sergei turned into his own room; such was his home-coming.

(To be Concluded.)

* Published by arrangement with Fleming H. Revell Co., New York, Chicago, and Toronto.

Facts

1st—Catarrh is a constitutional disease. The best doctors in the world say so.

2d—It requires a constitutional remedy. Everyone can see that this is sense.

3d—The experience of thousands proves that the true remedy is found in

Hood's Sarsaparilla

Which cures Catarrh because it purifies, vitalizes and enriches the blood. In so doing it also repairs the diseased tissues, builds up the whole system and creates a good appetite.

Hood's Pills act harmoniously with Hood's Sarsaparilla.

...NADJA;...

A Tale of the Russian Steppes.*

BY OLIVER M. NORRIS.

THE PEASANTS SURPRISE SERGEI IN HIS GARDEN.

CHAPTER XXII.

Sergei as Villager.

IN Slavo, things speedily settled down after the war into their ordinary work-a-day groove; they were not politicians there, and were content if they could sow their grain and reap their harvest in peace, no man making them afraid.

Sergei soon discovered that the General declined to take him into his confidence; indeed he seemed in every possible way to avoid seeing him. At nightfall, or very early in the morning, he could be seen feebly pacing along the walk in front of the house supported by Grisha, but after a few minntes they would both disappear again. Yakov and Marfa waited on them, and kept Sergei informed of anything that happened out of the common.

Sergei, now rapidly gaining strength, soon felt that he could no longer remain in his uncle's house. With an ever-increasing desire for work among the villagers, he felt that he must live with them, be one of them, and enter fully and wholeheartedly into their ways of life and thought. So he left his uncle's house, and went to live with the Uriadnik until he could finish building a cottage for himself on a plot of land he had bought outside the village. He and Mikhail expended a lot of pains on drawing plans for this house. It was to serve as a model for the whole country side. There were two large airy rooms, and a little kitchen, and all sorts of cupboards and a store room. It was built in the simplest way, and with the cheapest materials. And then the garden. Sergei labored like a slave at it, morning, noon and night. Their harvesting over for the day, the villagers would flock around to see the Panitch work in his garden, and Sergei, his coat and cap off, his hair and great tawny beard dripping, would explain to them what he was doing, and they would all talk together and discuss it. Before Sergei had been gardening a week there was not a man in Slavo who was not delving and hoeing in his own little plot, sowing winter seeds presented by Sergei, removing rubbish, fencing, tidying up all round.

But Sergei's best work was done in the winter that followed. The aged man who filled the post of village schoolmaster had become too old for the duty and he expressed a wish to retire. To the astonishment of the villagers, Sergei undertook to teach the school himself. He had the big room newly whitewashed and sent for a case of new books from Kief with a lathe and some carpenter's tools. The news that the Panitch was ready to begin teaching brought every boy and girl in the village to the school and Sergei had more than he could do. Mikhail came to help and between them the teaching was done. Not books only, but carpentering, leather-work, basket-making, and other useful arts were taught and for the first time in Slavo there was real education to be had.

It was surprising in how short a time the two reformers began to see signs of reformation. Haim Rosenberg's successor saw his occupation almost gone. The schoolroom and the big room in Sergei's izba were filled night after night with eager crowds of learners.

Sergei at last found himself filling the role of village reformer. He began to know the peasants with unsurpassable insight into their lives and character. He became one of them in his soul, in his sympathies. He had heard and read all about the mighty ones of earth, their state, ambition, pride; but it was only in the lives of the peasantry that he saw what was really great and beautiful, what was tragic and heroic; he now saw also that beautiful ideas were none the less lovely because they are of lowly origin, and dressed in homely garb.

Mikhail nobly aided him with his own peculiar gifts. It was Mikhail's ambition to seek to lift his neighbors from the sin and soil of time to the eternal light on which his own strong eyes were so steadily fixed. He was himself a man purified by the study of truth and by constant work, and he came to feel as he never felt before that work is prayer, that human life to be purified must pass through the dust and disfigurement of earthly toil.

All this time the General in his privacy heard occasional echoes of what was going on in the village. Although latterly he had been the willing companion of Grisha in many of his frenzied acts, he had never completely lost the balance of the man of affairs, of the man who understood the world. He made frequent inquiries as to the work and felt, somehow, a growing interest in it all. The gradually darkening cloud of increasing pain and ever-failing health that hung over him was a sore trial. He clung to life with a passionate love, and his frenzied and continuous appeals to heaven for restored health were terrible manifestations, if any, alas! were needed, of the Nemesis that waits on the last years of an ill-spent life.

Gladly would Sergei have paid him filial attentions but the old man shrank from him and sought religious help from Grisha. But Sergei could pray for him and one day, hearing that as a last resort a famous doctor had been summoned from Kief to advise, Sergei asked Father Ambrose, Mikhail and a few friends to meet at his house and pray for the aged man. The General heard of the meeting and while they were at prayer he amazed them by staggering into the room. He thanked them for their interest in him and was about to say something more, when utterance failed him. He turned half round toward Sergei, swayed unsteadily and fell prostrate. They raised him and found that he was dead.

Grisha had followed him to the meeting and he bent over him when he fell. His clouded mind seemed to realize what had occurred and with a low cry he bounded away from the house. He was never seen again. A few days afterward a herd-boy brought into Slavo the Icon and the old tattered Book of Ordeal. He had found them on the edge of the quicksands. Then the people knew the end of Grisha. He had perished in that treacherous place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The New Regime.

The General's death and Grisha's mysterious disappearance caused much excitement of course, and were the theme of many a long evening's talk round the big wall-stoves in the cottages of Slavo. But as time went on the life of the village resumed its usual course, the events of that night of the general's death became history, and none the less history because in a few short months they became inextricably entangled with myth and legend. Were any chance traveler to visit Slavo today, and ask for an authentic account of what happened on that winter's evening he would hear a stranger tale than any the reader knows.

July came round again with all its ripeness and color, and the people of Slavo looked out on their yellowing oceans of corn, and felt that quiet contentment was truly a blessed state. Or they stood at their cottage doors, and looked at their tall flaunting sunflowers and many another flower that now ornamented their gardens, at their bright green garden railings, the neat paths, the white walls, the trim little farmyards, and could hardly realize that in one short year their village had been transformed.

Who would succeed the General in the ownership of Slavo? That was the question all were asking with the utmost anxiety. Would it be the beloved Sergei or the hated and dreaded Vladimir? Every one knew that it was Vladimir the General had loved and there was a general fear that he would be the new lord. But questioning was turned into amazement when it was learned that the General had sold Slavo some time before his death and that it was not his to leave. He had sold it and during the last few months of his life had remained in possession only by the kindness of the purchaser. And who then was the owner? It was the Countess Olga.

One day toward the end of harvest when all the village was busy in the fields the Countess came to take possession. She was accompanied by a fair-haired lady who looked around her with keen interest and whom the Countess treated with sisterly deference. They were received by old Yakov and Marfa who had grown old in the General's service and were now wondering if they would lose their places.

"I'm your new mistress," said the Countess in response to Yakov's obsequious welcome, "and this is my friend. I've come to see the house, and if you and Marfa—Marfa, come and shake hands—would just show us into a room where we might sit down a little, we would wait while you get the samovar ready for tea."

"And are you the Countess?" broke in Marfa. "Well, I am glad." She looked a moment steadily at the fair-haired lady, and her eyes grew big with wonder. "Well, I declare! If you are not white Nadja of the ferry, I'm surely blind or dreaming." And seeing Nadja smile she sprang at her and kissed her again and again.

The old servitors stood gazing and smiling, but all at once recollecting themselves bowed low again, showed the new-comers to a room and bustled away to get tea in a state of happy excitement such as they had never known before in all their lives.

The bubbling *samovar* was soon on the table, and a delightful spread of the best that Marfa could provide — eggs, and cream, and butter, and white bread, and honey.

"We'll stop her to-night, Marfa," s Olga, "and you'll get a room ready for Tell the coachman. And as soon as t people come home from the steppe will y tell Yakov to walk down to the villa and ask Panitch Sergei if he would mind coming up to see us for a little. A if you'll get two or three glasses w gather some of those flowers and try brighten up this dingy room. Wh Panitch comes you must have some sup ready."

As the sun sank the two women wat ing out over the cornfields saw the labor come home in groups. At first they w so far away that their faces and figu could not be distinquished, but as th came nearer Olga knew that that fo towering above the rest, dressed in wh with the great hat over his tanned f and flowing beard must be Sergei; a Nadja knew—Nadja knew them all, l her eyes lingered on the tall, slight m who walked with Sergei, and looked fr time to time smilingly in his face. Na sighed as she thought of what might h been, and Olga heard her sigh and t her hand.

The evening wore on, and up ca Yakov to announce that Panitch had rived. The two women rose to rece their guest, and there was no need phrases of welcome from the hostess. I sparkling eyes and heightened color cheek and neck showed her joy.

They talked far into the night. Th spoke of old memories of childhood, scene the war, Sergei's reforms, Mikhail's wo the Countess's plans for the future. Th Nadja rose, and begged to be allowed to tire. Marfa and Yakov went off with her show her her room and to have a t with her about old times. Olga complai of the heat, and threw back the lace sc that covered her head and shoulders. S turned half round, and left her seat move to the low wall along the terra Sergei rose and stood beside her, and th looked across the sleeping village to full moon rising, and hanging low and over the misty river.

Sergei bent toward the slight fig standing by his side.

"Olga, when you left to go south San Stefano you wrote that perhaps would next meet under the arbor-vita the garden at Krasnaya Balka. We m instead, here on the terrace at Slavo. I thought for a moment that you were other women——"

Sergei took her hand in one of his, a with the other he stroked her hair. S drew closer, and up stole a slender a round Sergei's neck.

"If I thought you were as other wom I would not speak to you, Olga, a now speak. But you think all the mor me because I am a village teacher and m my own corn. Olga, you know hov love you. Surely your heart told you t long ago."

But Olga did not answer him w words. She buried her face in his bre and gently loosening her other hand fr his grasp it went to clasp its fellow rou his neck. Sergei's two strong hands ca softly down on the shining hair, and r ing the beautiful face from its shelter kissed the closed eyes and the parted li

"Olga, at last!"

Her eyes opened, and she looked up her lover with a light in her face th thrilled him.

"At last," she whispered.

It was difficult at first to say whetl Sergei and his wife lived more at Krasna Balka or at Slavo; but in time they fina arranged to settle in Krasnaya Bal Nadja was Olga's representative in the v lage; and Mikhail continued his work Slavo, and managed his mother's far Mikhail often visited Nadja in the ev ings, and would talk with her on sch management and other neutral subjec

He had long to wait, but he waited p tiently, and finally had his reward. Th live in Slavo in the house built by Ser for himself.

THE END.

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